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THE
HISTORY OF LINCOLN

NAVY

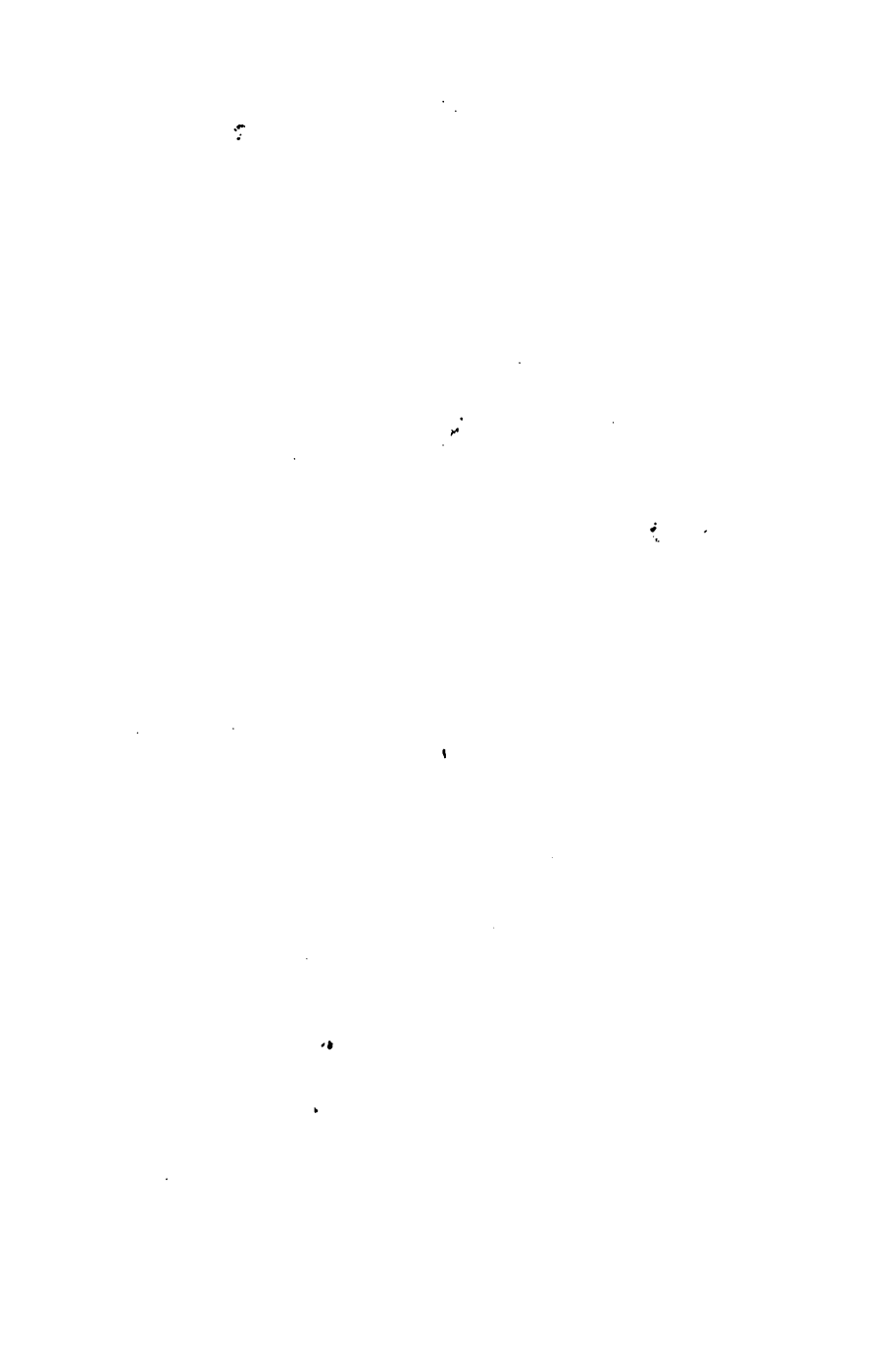
Ch. 2. *From the beginning to the present*

THE
HEIRESS OF KINGSLEY HALL



MAY SOMERS

Or, A Peep behind the Curtain



THE
HEIRESS OF KINGSLEY HALL

BY
AMY CAMPBELL

MAY SOMERS

Or, A Peep behind the Curtain

BY
ELEANOR CAMPBELL



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CHAPTER I

THE SCHOOL

"Where had you and your school been?"
Art took a long look at the
Old man and his
That and up and down the road.

IT was a very old school, and it was
was thinking of it, the school was
he coming from the school.
Manor House of the school, and
hand. An entire school, and
town. In the large school, and
enough for the school, and
only meant for the school, and
holly school, and
school, and
under the school, and
staying at the school, and
and the school, and
about the school, and
for some years, and
Visions of the school, and
~~even though the school, and~~



CHAPTER I.

THE ARRIVAL.

"Where shall that land, that spot of earth, be found?
Art thou a man? a patriot? look around;
Oh, thou shalt find, howe'er thy footsteps roam,
That land thy country, and that spot thy home."

Montgomery.

IT was a week before Christmas day; every one was thinking of, and making preparations for the coming festivities, and the inhabitants of the Manor House of "Lime Trees" were not behind hand. An expedition had been made to the nearest town in the largest carriage, to buy gifts at least enough for six Christmas trees, though they were only meant for one; the gardener brought in fresh holly every day to decorate halls and rooms; the school children were practising an evening hymn under the direction of Miss Percival, a young lady staying at the Manor for the Christmas festivities, and the elder members of the family were bustling about in a mysterious manner, evidently preparing for some great event which was still a "secret." Visions of white, green and pink tarletan could be seen through the sometimes half-open door of the

lady's-maid's room. Mrs. Summers was never to be found when looked for, appeared only at luncheon hurriedly, nodding significantly to the party concerned in the secret, and disappearing just as suddenly again after the meal was over. But the mystery was at last to be disclosed. Breakfast had just been removed from the table, and the company were about to disperse for the day, when a thundering ring at the bell caused Mr. Summers to look up from the papers he had been so deeply buried in, and express a wish that bells had never been invented, but that people would be contented with the good old custom of having knockers! He had hardly finished his impatient ejaculation, when the door opened and a figure in a greatcoat, still covered with the falling snow, and looking, as he himself expressed it, like a young Father Christmas, entered. All started, Mrs. Summers herself, although a person of no small dimensions, actually flew to meet him. Mr. Summers threw the papers aside, and grasped him warmly by the hand.

"Hallo! Reginald! Home again! why, this *is* good luck!"

"And two days sooner than we expected you!" gasped Mrs. Summers.

Meanwhile Margaret, the eldest daughter, always thoughtful, had rung the bell and ordered hot

breakfast to be brought up ; had divested Reginald of his greatcoat, and had put an arm-chair for him beside the blazing hearth. All crowded round him. Even the guests visiting at the Manor, who did not know him, felt quite at ease in his presence ; how could any one feel otherwise, with his frank, open, cheerful way ?

He was a gentlemanly looking lad of about twenty-six, with light brown hair and eyes ; his nose was rather too long to be handsome ; his mouth firm and sometimes stern ; he was rather pale, but his face was animated whilst narrating the adventures of his tour abroad. " Yes," he said, as at last he stopped for want of breath, " it was all very jolly abroad, but I couldn't be away from home on Christmas day."

" No indeed," said Mrs. Summers, " away on Christmas day ! Now don't shake your head, papa, I *am* going to let out the secret ; Reginald *must* know, for the whole affair is got up on his account. Fancy ! in the old Manor House—an unheard-of thing—a ball on Christmas eve !"

A general shout of glee, then voices asking in dismay, " Oh ! mamma, what shall I do for a dress ?" " Oh ! Aunt, I have not even got a white tarletan here !" " Oh, cousin Alice, I must write to mamma to send me a dress !"

Reginald laughed. " What ! young ladies with-

out dresses ! I thought they always brought multitudes with them everywhere—at least to judge by the number of trunks, carpet-bags, &c., which they always have in their train. I never shall forget coming down from London this week ; an old lady had lost all her packages, and was accompanied by a horrid little poodle to boot. I took compassion on the poor old body and hunted up her things, but never had I such a work in my life. First came a ponderous basket, then a box, labelled ‘Glass with care,’ then a trunk, then four or five bonnet-boxes, and at last, when I thought I had got everything, there was ‘sweet little Fanny’s’ (that was the dog) basket missing, the basket she always slept in, and she always had nightmare when she didn’t sleep in it. I vowed inwardly it was the last time I would be civil to a lady—present company of course always excepted,” said Reginald, bowing to the assembled party.

“Poor ladies, don’t attack them so,” said Carry, a mischievous girl of fifteen, who was sitting at his feet ; “you would have been shivering still in your greatcoat, if some good fairy, though it was in the shape of a female, had not transformed everything!”

Mrs. Summers now retired with the young ladies to consult about necessary “letter writing,” and Reginald was carried off by Margaret and Carry to their boudoir, to have a comfortable chat.

CHAPTER II.

A CHAPTER THAT BEGINS SATISFACTORILY AND
ENDS ABRUPTLY.

"Those hours that came, and fled so fast,
Of pleasure, or of pain,
As phantoms rose from out the past,
Before my eyes again!"

Proctor.

PERHAPS you are wondering all this time who Reginald is ; he is not a Summers, that you can see at a glance—he is too tall, and not so thickly set. Yet he is always called "Reginald Summers." Thus his story runs :—

Mr. Summers had been left, at his father's death, with a handsome income, and the Manor House of Lime Trees. He did not marry at once, as every one supposed he would have done, but he did a very strange thing ! He went for a visit to a watering-place, and became acquainted with a clergyman, a poor man, but a gentleman, whose wife was dead. He had two little boys, the elder of whom was only four years old. Mr. Summers was sorry for the poor man, and invited him sometimes to dine at his hotel. One day Mr. Summers was struck by the following paragraph in the papers :—

"Sudden death.—The Reverend Mr. Bell, late resident in this town, fell down suddenly in the street yesterday, apparently seized with a spasm. Medical aid was soon procured, but proved ineffectual. Mr. Bell was conveyed to a neighbouring shop, where he died a few minutes afterwards, unconscious. The result of the inquest was a verdict of 'death from heart-complaint!' The sudden removal of one, much respected in this parish, will occasion regret both to rich and poor. He might well be called 'the friend of all.' Let this remind many to watch and pray, for at an hour when they think not the Son of Man cometh."

Mr. Summers attended the vicar's funeral a few days later, and afterwards went to his late friend's house. The brother of the deceased was expected to return soon from India; he had a large family of his own, and would not be likely to be able to do much for the orphans. Their other guardian was a rough man, but kind-hearted; he would look after the children he said, but they could not expect much from him, for he was not rich. Their father had left them nothing.

Mr. Summers took the matter into consideration. A rich man, with no ties and no heir, why should he not adopt one of these orphans? Quickly the proposal was made, as quickly accepted. Reginald, the elder of the two, was henceforth to be "Reginald

A Satisfactory Beginning. 7

Summers." The little boy was brought to the Manor House, and the dull old mansion rang with shouts of childish laughter. He reigned everywhere supreme ; no sound was so dear to Mr. Summers as the patter of the little feet at the study door, no voice so dear as the little voice that said, " Papa, play with little Reggie ! " A year later Mr. Summers married, and they had two daughters, to whom we have already been introduced. At the time my story begins, these girls were of the ages of fifteen and sixteen ; but Reginald was the acknowledged pet of all, from Mr. Summers downwards. He knew his story, Mr. Summers had told it to them all once, but it had never been mentioned again. Reginald was far too happy where he was to wish for another home. Nothing had ever been heard of his relations, and he had a vague idea he would be separated from the Manor House if he found them—so followed the wise old maxim, " Let well alone ! "

At this period he had been for a holiday tour on the Continent, and was every one's hero ; having visited Italy with its blue skies and Michael Angelos ; Germany, with its pipes and beer ; France with its sparkling wines ; and now !—— he was sitting in dear old England, in Margaret's and Carry's boudoir, on his favourite seat, near the window (which commanded a fine view of the

neighbouring hills), Caroline on a footstool on the hearth-rug, and Margaret at her work-table.

"Have you heard," said Carry gaily, "of the grand arrival of the heiress Miss—Somebody, I don't know what her name is—at Wellington Hall? She's coming to the ball."

"No," said Reginald listlessly, "an arrival of what did you say?"

"Of an heiress," repeated Carry, "why, it's all the talk; what *is* her name Margaret?"

"I don't know," answered Margaret, "she is always called The Heiress of Kingsley Hall."

What made Reginald turn pale, causing the girls to inquire if anything were the matter—why did he laugh in that hoarse and unnatural manner, saying it was nothing, he only felt a little giddy, he would go into the garden and visit his favourite haunts, but would wait for the girls in front of the house if they would be quick and put on their things. What made him, whilst waiting, stamp his feet on the crackling frost with impatience, muttering, "The Heiress of Kingsley Hall!" No! it cannot be! "The Heiress of Kingsley Hall!" it must be some mistake. Did the vision of a blue Italian sky, and the sweet face of a girl come before him, as he stood there? Did the remembrance of many days spent by her side rise up before him? and then—oh! then—a blank—an unutterable blank!

CHAPTER III.

THE READER IS OBLIGED TO TAKE THE "EXPRESS"
FROM LIME TREES TO ITALY.

" Her sunny ringlets round her
A golden cloud had made,
While her large hat was keeping
Her calm blue eyes in shade."

Proctor.

WE must now retrace the thread of our story to explain the cause of the unusual agitation exhibited by Reginald Summers, on hearing mention made of the heiress of Kingsley Hall. The scene which rises before our eyes is a bright blue Italian sky smiling on a little town not far from Florence. It is a favourite resort in summer and autumn for tourists, and the little dotted villas and pleasant gardens, with the river winding in and out, form a pretty landscape. On a hot day in September, before our story begins, we might have seen Reginald Summers lounging in the verandah of one of the largest hotels this little spot can boast, with a cigar in his mouth, and a glass of iced-champagne by his side, drinking in the beautiful landscape, and wishing Margaret were there to sketch the view. As he watched the bluish smoke of his cigar curl into the air, feeling perhaps just a little bit dull, he was startled by loud voices below him,

and then he heard a soft musical voice say in English, "What *shall* we do? they will not or cannot understand; how I *wish* I could speak to them in Italian." Reginald flung away the end of his cigar, and walked to the edge of the verandah. Before the door of the hotel stood a carriage with luggage; two ladies had just got out, the one was elderly and rather sprightly-looking, the other, a young lady of about seventeen or eighteen. She was dressed in a light grey travelling costume, fitting closely to an elegant little figure, a large straw hat with a long blue feather shaded a pair of deep blue eyes, the only beautiful feature in her face, but her hair was of a golden brown shade, and fell in natural ringlets round her. In one hand she held a travelling-bag of Russian leather; with the other she tried vainly to make a porter, who was quickly throwing the luggage off the carriage, understand her meaning by signs. There was something in her look and tone that caught Reginald's fancy; besides it would be but civil to offer his services, so he ran lightly down the stairs and soon found himself face to face with the ladies.

He bowed, and said in a frank voice, "I hope you will excuse a perfect stranger for thus introducing himself to you; but, sitting in the verandah, I was a witness of your embarrassment, and knowing a little of the language, I thought I might be

able to help you out of your difficulty ; this porter is making some mistake about your boxes, is he not ? ”

The elderly lady, to Reginald's great annoyance, stepped forward, and acted as spokeswoman, “ Yes, we *are* in great difficulty, our ignorance of the language has proved a great impediment in travelling ; these boxes are not ours, there was a great confusion at the railway station, and our luggage must have been exchanged ; will you be so kind as to make the porter understand this ? ”

In a few moments Reginald had arranged everything to every one's satisfaction, and the carriage was dismissed. The deep blue eyes had all this time been fixed on him, as if wishing to read him through and through.

Now, she extended one of her small well-gloved hands and said, “ Oh, how can we thank you enough for your great kindness ; what should we have done had you not arrived so opportunely.”

There was no time for more, for the elderly lady began to get fidgetty about rooms.

She said quickly, “ As we live in the same hotel, I hope we shall have the pleasure of meeting you again, and expressing once more our gratitude for your kindness ! Come, Agnes, the maid is waiting to show us our rooms ! ”

So saying, she swept in at the door, Agnes fol-

lowing, and only stopping to add as she passed,
 "We shall see you again, shall we not?"

Reginald bowed; he too hoped that it was not
 the last time he should gaze on those blue eyes.

CHAPTER IV.

A GROWING INTIMACY AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

"Als ich zuerst empfunden,
 Dass Liebe brechen mag:
 Mir wars, als sei verschwunden
 Die Sonn' am hellen Tag."
Geibel.

GR EATLY to Reginald's disappointment, the ladies did not appear at table d'hôte, nor could he find out anything about them from the waiter, except that they had ordered dinner to be sent upstairs, as they were tired; also that the young lady's boxes had come, and that they were all ticketed "Miss Agnes Selby." The second day he was not well, and obliged to keep his room; the third day he caught but a passing glance of them at table d'hôte, and a stiff bow was all the sign of recognition, but the fourth day he spoke to them again. This is how it came to pass. He had gone to Florence for the day, and was returning in the evening from the terminus, through the garden belonging to the hotel, when he saw two

figures advancing towards him, whom he soon recognised to be Miss Selby, and the elderly lady, her aunt, a "Miss Morton."

He bowed, and would have passed on, but some irresistible impulse made him stop and say, "I hope you are enjoying the beauties of this little spot, and have not again been annoyed by troublesome domestics?"

A conversation then ensued upon V—— and its beauties; on the advantage of knowing foreign languages, on Italy in general, &c. By this time Reginald found that they had turned quite in an opposite direction from the hotel, and he was walking beside Miss Selby, hearing her sweet voice, as she gaily disputed with him the merits of England and Italy; he being a warm advocate for old England, she delighting in romantic Italy! But now again, that tiresome Miss Morton cut short the conversation by saying it was getting chilly, and they all turned homewards. This was but the beginning of a series of walks and pleasure-parties together. Neither he nor they had any friends there, Miss Morton was always a third, acting as chaperone, rendering it not remarkable that the three English thus thrown together, should nearly always be in each other's company, though the one *was* a handsome young Englishman, and the other but a young girl. Sometimes it also so

happened, when Miss Morton was tired, that the two would leave her seated on some mossy bank, and clamber up a steep ascent alone, and strange to say they generally remained away a long time. The people at Lime Trees wondered why Reginald postponed leaving V—— to visit some more interesting spot on the Continent, but he never mentioned "Miss Selby," he hardly himself knew why. So September and part of October passed away. The weather was getting chilly. Reginald was sitting alone at breakfast one morning when a letter was brought to him. It was from home; a kind letter from Mr. Summers, saying, that Reginald had now stayed long enough at V——; he was sorry to curtail his visit there, as the place seemed to please him, but there was still much to be seen on the Continent, and he must be home by Christmas time. Never till that moment did Reginald know how he indeed loved V——; for the first time did he realize that these happy days must at last come to an end. The same evening he was standing alone on the balcony with Agnes Selby, Miss Morton had a headache.

"So Miss Selby," he said, "these happy days are soon coming to an end; I have had orders from headquarters to quit V—— within a week, I think of leaving on Friday." He tried to speak gaily, but his voice shook a little in spite of him-

self. He saw her grow pale, and a strange hope filled his heart, but she too tried to answer him in the same tone he had used towards her.

"Indeed ! our orders have not come yet ; having come chiefly on account of my health, I can stay here till I am tired : it will be very dull after you leave, we have no other friends here."

"Miss Selby," Reginald began passionately, but whatever the end of his sentence was to have been will never be known, for at that moment a sergeant appeared with the request that Miss Selby would come directly to Miss Morton, and Agnes darted away, half glad to be free, so as to have a moment's thought, but little thinking how long it would be ere she saw Reginald again. When she had gone Reginald paced the balcony impatiently. He heard the bustle of some arrival downstairs, but he heeded nothing. Some thought seemed to have struck him, which annoyed and perplexed him. "Yes," he muttered, "I am Mr. Summers' *adopted* son, not his *own* ; I *was* to have been his heir, but he has daughters now : no, it was well I did not tell *her* what I meant. I am but a poor boy brought up on charity, well off now, but penniless at Mr. Summers' death ; oh, *why* did I ever meet her?" He lit a lamp and went to his bedroom, and was about to draw down the blinds and shut the windows for the night, when two figures mov-

ing amongst the trees in the garden attracted his attention. Something made him instinctively hold his breath, put out the light, and feeling very much like a spy, look out into the garden, so that he could see the figures there, and at the same time be himself completely hidden from their view. They were talking, and a voice,—it was a man's voice—could be heard, but what he was saying was as yet inaudible. Presently the moon, which had been hidden by some clouds, shone out brightly ; shone out brightly upon a pale, agitated face, that was looking with half earnestness, half entreaty into the face of a handsome man of about thirty.

"Yes," she was saying, "what *shall* I do ; I never, never can forgive myself ; oh ! Herbert, Herbert ! it cannot be *too* late."

"Hush ! dearest," was the answer, "it *is* not too late ; to-morrow we will leave by the first train, and you shall come to our house first ; you alone know what a welcome will await you there ; come, I must go to my hotel, it is not far from here. Addio !" He bent down and kissed her gently, "Come ! the Heiress of Kingsley Hall must not be sad !"

Reginald drew down the blind. He had forgotten that he had not another match to light his lamp with, but he did not care. He paced his room in the dark for many an hour during the silent watches of the night. He saw it all now ;

what was it that she could never forgive herself? she, the heiress of Kingsley Hall, had been lured into liking a boy, a mere beggar boy, he said bitterly; and the man, oh! he *loved* her—he had even that in the look of his eyes. He was her accepted lover, for she had no brothers—had she not told him so herself? Yes! they were flying quickly from the dangerous spot; he had said it was not *too* late. No! not *too* late. Reginald clenched his fist in anger and disappointment; it was natural she should not love him, but why then had she deceived him, led him to believe by her manner that she was not indifferent to his attentions? Early the next morning a carriage came to the door, two ladies and a gentleman got in; the carriage drove away; the heiress of Kingsley Hall was gone, and with her all Reginald's happiness and love of the Continent; for the heiress of Kingsley Hall was none other than Agnes Selby.

CHAPTER V.

CHRISTMAS EVE COMES AT LAST.

“ And oft his features and his air
A shade of troubled mystery wear,
A glance of hurried wildness, fraught
With some unfathomable thought.”

Mrs. Hemans.

THE day of the ball had arrived, the evening—the eventful evening—had come. Reginald was fixing holly up in the large drawing-room, which had been cleared for the occasion, when Margaret entered. “ Only you here, Reggy; I was looking for mamma, I must give her this note just come from Wellington Hall. Oh! here she is!” as Mrs. Summers entered.

The latter, after having perused the little billet, handed it to Margaret, saying, “ It is rather a pity, I had heard so much about her, and was anxious to see the heiress. Miss Selby and the gentleman expected have been detained from coming to the Hall. Well, we must manage to make the evening agreeable without the heiress—eh! Reggie?”

Reginald did not answer—perhaps he did not hear the remark, he was busily engaged fixing a sprig of holly over the picture of the “ Madonna.”

Every one said the ball was a success; every one

had danced enough ; all the dresses had been duly admired. Was Reginald glad Miss Selby was not there ? Could he have seen her in his house, dancing with the man she loved ? Only once, when standing opposite the picture of the Madonna, he seemed lost in thought, and Carry, who was passing, pulled his sleeve. " Well, Reggy, I hope you know that Madonna's face by heart ? those eyes always follow one everywhere."

" Come, Carry, we have not waltzed yet together ;" and the two soon glided out of sight amongst the other dancers.

CHAPTER VI.

A SUDDEN BLOW.

" If it be possible, O my Father, God,
Remove, remove this heavy shade of woe."

John Collett.

" **A**GNES, my dear !" " Well, papa !" and a bright, pleasant looking girl rose from the ottoman on which she had been sitting and came and bent over the invalid chair of the speaker. He was a man already past middle age, and rendered infirm by ill health. His hair was quite grey, and his face wore an expression of weariness and pain, but his whole face

brightened and his eyes lighted up as he saw the fair figure at his side.

Patting her cheek tenderly he said, "My darling, your roses are all fading already, this will never do. The sun is shining brightly; run and put on your hat, and have a walk in the garden. What a selfish old father you have to be sure, to have turned his daughter into his little sick nurse."

She laughed gaily, and bent down to kiss his forehead, as she answered, "Your little sick-nurse is fully repaid for all her trouble by seeing you looking so much better; and oh, papa (and her voice trembled a little), I can never forget that through my selfishness I *almost* came too late."

"Pooh, pooh," said the old gentleman, "I thought you were too sensible a girl Agnes to think of that folly again; but now run away, I will promise to be very good whilst you are gone. I feel rather sleepy, and think I should like a short nap."

She arranged his pillow comfortably, pulled down the blind, so that the sun might not disturb him, and gently left the room. She ran upstairs, only stopping at the staircase window to look into the garden, exclaiming, "What a long time since I have been for a walk there; I declare I have entirely forgotten to look after my spring wardrobe. Well, *qu'importe*, I am alone here, and this is the

very thing," as she caught sight of a shady white hat with a long blue feather which hung on a peg in the hall. Something seemed to strike her as she placed the hat on her head, and she descended more leisurely and her face wore a graver expression than when she had come up. She only stopped once on her way into the garden to look into the library and assure herself that the calm features had sunk into repose. Lightly she tripped down the gravel walk, but soon tired with the unaccustomed exercise, she seated herself in a little arbour, and drew from her pocket a letter she had received that morning. It ran as follows:—

“ *Wellington Hall, March 6, 18—.*

“ DEAREST AGNES,—What an age it is since I have seen you; I declare, almost a year! It seems to me like a century, you poor little imprisoned bird. It was too bad of you not to come to us at Christmas; but I suppose you did what was right, as you always do; but you missed the jolliest ball. It was given by the Summers at Lime Trees, in honour I believe of their son's return from the Continent—such a fine handsome fellow, though perhaps a little proud. Fanny won't allow that, and says he is just her type of a *preux* chevalier, and I must confess he has a dash of romance about him. He is not you know Mr. Summers'

own son ; in fact there is some mystery attached to his history. Some say he is the son of a deceased friend of Mr. Summers, others that he was only some poor child brought up on charity. Nobody knows whether or not he is heir to the estates ; and it is this indefinite something which secures for him a more general reception in this neighbourhood than acknowledged heirs have, who are always considered 'good catches.' *Entre nous*, I believe Fanny would take him to-morrow if he gave her the chance ; it is most amusing to see her attempts to fascinate him, and succeed in making him to be more to her than he is to all other girls. But in what a silly fashion I am running on, and to you who are so sensible, and will call this 'sentimental trash' about a mere stranger in whom you can have no possible interest." Here followed a great deal more about winter gaieties, and the letter closed with—"Now, dear Agnes, be good for once in your life and come here soon. I can hardly believe that you have never yet been at Wellington Hall. What a 'sell' (excuse slang) for Fanny if you secured her *preux* chevalier ; I declare it would be charming, you would come and live near us, and—— There is the gong for luncheon.—Your ever loving

"AMABEL HYDE."

Agnes sat deep in thought for some minutes but presently she started as a tear fell on her hand. "Oh! how silly," she exclaimed energetically. "I believe long confinement to the house makes me weak and stupid, yet why should I so long for those days in Italy once more? and why should this letter recall everything again so vividly? the blue sky, the hills, the hotel, the——" But here Agnes hardly allowed herself to think for a moment that Italy had possessed for her any greater charms than its scenery and quiet. Yet she knew full well that, without the name "Reginald" having once been mentioned in the whole course of Amabel's letter, it was the description of Fanny's *preux* chevalier that had awakened her strong love of Italy once more. Her lip curled as she thought of Fanny daring to try her mean arts on him, and yet Fanny was so beautiful. What if her efforts were successful? "A mystery concerning his history;" she laughed scornfully. What did it matter to any one what or who he was, he would ever be the same Reginald Summers, the perfect gentleman. Her thoughts wandered too far from Italy she felt to be either good or profitable for her; it was getting chilly and her father would be waiting for his tea. How thoughtless of her to have forgotten him so long. She put the letter into her pocket, smoothed her wavy ringlets, and

entered the library softly so as not to disturb her parent, whom she supposed to be sleeping ; but she was surprised on entering the room to see him sitting up in his chair, pale with agitation, and holding in his trembling hand a newspaper on which his eyes rested with a kind of glazed stare as if fascinated. In a moment she was at his side, exclaiming, " O father, what have I done ! what has happened—I should not have left you ! "

" My child," he murmured, " say, Thy will be done, O Father ! in heaven." She obeyed mechanically, and he held out the newspaper to her with the words, " Failed—ruined—we are beggars." She hardly comprehended his meaning, till she glanced at the fatal paragraph. He watched her keenly as she read and noted the increasing pallor of her cheek. It was but a short notice, such as we often see, but which, if it does not strike home, we pass over quickly, hardly stopping to consider the dreadful calamity it entails on others. The notice informed the public of the failure of one of the largest banks in London ; nearly the whole of her father's capital was invested here, as Agnes knew. She continued to hold the newspaper with a kind of deathly grasp, till her father's voice broke the silence, and recalled her to some consciousness of where she was.

" My child," he repeated, " we are beggars."

Then she knew it was her part to comfort him, and she said gently, "All is not lost while we are spared to each other."

The voice of his child touched a chord in the old man's heart that seemed till then to have turned into stone with the sudden blow. His stern features relaxed, and he wept like a child. He bent back in his chair, and allowed Agnes to arrange his pillow once more comfortably. Then she ordered tea as if nothing had happened, but neither of them spoke again that evening of the terrible blow that had fallen on them.

When Agnes had bidden Mr. Selby good-night, and he remained alone, he pressed his hand to his forehead and murmured, "O God! do Thou in Thy great mercy help me."

CHAPTER VII.

AGNES' RESOLUTION.

"Has fate o'erwhelmed thee with some sudden blow?

Let thy tears flow;

But know when storms are past, the heavens appear

More pure, more clear;

And hope, when farthest from their shining rays,

For brighter days."

Proctor.

HOWEVER weary the dreary watches of the night to a sleepless eye must appear they

must pass at length. Agnes Selby rose the next morning, after a night spent in thought and prayer, with a feeling of relief that with the daylight came the time "to be up and doing." She had sought and obtained strength for her trials from the only true fountain of rest, in confiding her sorrows to her Father in heaven; then, after much consideration, after wrestling long with her pride and inclination, she had come to a resolution which had cost her many bitter tears, she herself alone knew how many.

The breakfast things had been removed from the table, the large Bible had been opened, and Mr. Selby had read in a low weak voice, which threatened often to break down, the portion of Scripture which had been the opening of every day since Agnes had been a little child. Not till after this did Agnes begin, in a voice that trembled a little, but as cheerful as she could make it, "I have been thinking of a plan. I know of course that we can no longer live here, that you can in fact no longer keep servants, and so——" But here Mr. Selby interrupted her.

"My child," he answered, "you say but what is too true; it may be years before we shall be able to live here, but I have still hopes that this bank will pay back, being considered one of the most flourishing in the metropolis; however, as I

said before, we have at least for two years to come nothing to hope for, and I may be dead by that time, so I have also thought of a plan. You, my child, brought up in every luxury, must not suffer for any failure; you shall go and live with your sister, she will be only too glad to have you with her, and there you will find a second home. I shall in the meantime take lodgings in London, for your sister must not be burdened with two; it would not be fair to her husband and family, and I shall look after my money matters there and see what can be done. Kingsley Hall must of course be let on a lease of two years to begin with. Now you see your father has not been idle, but planning also; in fact it is the only way open to us. You were going to suggest something of the same sort were you not?

"No," she said quickly, "my plan is a very different one. It may not appear so feasible at first sight, but I am sure it will prove in the end a much better one. Papa (suddenly, with unusual energy), what is the use of all the advantages you have given me, drawing, music, singing, and a good knowledge of foreign languages, if I am not to put them to some account? I should indeed be a selfish daughter were I not in some way to try to repay you for all your forethought for me. Papa, I wish to be a governess. My sister I know would

be willing to receive me, but we know not how long we may remain in poverty, and therefore I could not consent to be a burden on my sister's hand for an indefinite period; besides, if I once sank into indolence, I should not afterwards like the idea of exerting myself. Should it be needed *you* must live with Alice, for though she might consider a sister a burden she could never look upon a father in that light."

Mr. Selby had listened with a half smile to this speech of his daughter. It seemed to him as if she spoke like a little child in the excitement of having found some new occupation of which it is totally ignorant, and without having calculated on the difficulties attending its execution. It was long before Agnes could convince him that she had only come to this resolution after much self-examination and forethought, and that she was in earnest. Then indeed he opposed it vehemently. It was not to be thought of that his tender child, brought up with every care, surrounded by every luxury, should plunge herself into the world's hard battle and have to undergo the possible indignity to which one in her position might be subjected. Not till Agnes had answered every objection—not till she had showed him that such conduct would rather increase her dignity than lower it, for she would thus be dependent on no one (here shone

out the real Selby pride, and her fond father liked to hear her talking so)—did he give his very reluctant consent with the words, “The Lord’s will be done, and His blessing go with you.”

Agnes having at last succeeded in attaining her object, rushed to her own room, and buried her face in her hands. “Was it true, was she Agnes Selby, but yesterday an heiress, now to be a governess? What would the world say and think? Agnes was not so much above the common race of mankind that this question should be one of indifference to her. Even the thought came, if Reginald Summers should hear of this, what would *he* think? He had no doubt already forgotten her, but if he should still not look on her quite with indifference, and ever met her again, would his pride stoop to own as his love one in what the world calls an ‘inferior position.’”

The thoughts as they whirled through her brain were cruel and hard. She scarcely allowed herself to believe that she had really thought them. But once more she knelt before the throne of the Almighty, and once again she rose comforted and composed, and returned to her father with no sign of her recent agitation—no sign that could betray to him that her resolution had cost her a pang. Truly Agnes Selby you are a heroine, and greater far than he that taketh a city.

CHAPTER VIII.

WE ARE INTRODUCED TO THE SCHOOL-ROOM OF
ASHLEY PARK AND ITS OCCUPANTS.

"One by one thy duties wait thee,
Let thy whole strength go to each,
Let no future dreams elate thee,
Learn thou first what these can teach."

Proctor.

"DON'T you wonder what she will be like? Come, Gertrude, you have given no opinion as yet upon the subject; give us a word-picture of her." The speaker was a handsome boy of some ten years, and the person he addressed was a girl of about sixteen, with a *bright* complexion, soft brown eyes and dark hair, shading a well-formed forehead; she was reading by the fire, contented with the light it afforded her, and seemingly not hearing the merry buzz of voices near the window.

The occupants of the window-seat formed a pretty group. Harry, the boy we have before introduced to our readers, sat with his leg on the window sill; a girl of about twelve, with light blue eyes, irregular features, and flaxen hair brushed straight behind her ears, stood beside him, trying in vain to teach the little terrier Dido, her own especial property, how to beg. On a low footstool, almost hidden by the window-curtain, sat the youngest

child, the pet of both brothers and sisters ; such a little fairy, you would hardly guess her to be already eight years old. Her light brown hair, not curly by nature, but very abundant, and of many shades, fell around her like a veil of gold ; her forehead was low, her eyes large and bluish grey, and they looked very wistfully at Gertrude, as she seconded Harry with an " Oh *do*, Gertrude ! "

Gertrude rose from her seat, and approached the little party at the window. She stroked Harry's curly hair with her hand, and seated herself on the footstool, taking the little girl on her knee, and saying as she looked into the bright eager face near hers, " So my little Constance wants to know what *I* think Miss Selby will be like ; well, I will tell you, but I have formed such a very ideal opinion of the lady in question, that I am afraid I shall have to bear a disappointment when I see her. However, here is my picture :—" A tall lady, with a very good figure, black wavy hair, deep brown eyes, with long lashes that curl on her cheek (this was always Gertrude's idea of *perfect* beauty)—of course a beautiful complexion, then very white lady-like hands—and Gertrude glanced instinctively at her own small white ones.

" With deep blue veins, and almond-shaped nails," chimed in Dora. She had just been reading her first novel, let it be known, had stolen

the said book out of the library, and read it in secret nooks. Every now and then she astonished the school-room inhabitants by quoting sentences in the booky-style.

An interruption was caused by the parlour-maid coming in to lay school-room tea, and a lamp having been placed on the table, the window seat was deserted, except by little Constance, who stood gazing out at the stars, with a thoughtful, almost sad look, in her large blue eyes. She was startled by a voice behind her saying, "A penny for your thoughts, Conny," and she was lifted up in the arms of her elder brother. A perfect giant in stature, he was looked up to in the school-room with great awe. He was fond of his brother and sisters, but did not know much about them, as the inhabitants of the school-room were seldom seen in dining-room or drawing-room; it being Lady Hay's opinion that children were best taken little notice of, or even much seen out of the region where governesses reigned supreme; therefore, shy, timid little Constance did not feel quite at ease in her brother's arms, although he only remarked, pulling her hair, "Now, I shan't let you down till you tell me what you were thinking about; come, have you forgotten; was it about Cousin Charles!"

The slightest possible blush rose into the little maid's cheeks at her thoughts being so quickly

guessed ; but her brother continued " Ah ! I was right—now, what will you give me for a secret : Cousin Charles is coming to dinner to-night ! Shall I coax mamma to let you come into desert ? "

" Oh ! no," said Constance quickly, " don't."

" Very well," he answered good humouredly ; but evidently vexed that what he had meant in kindness should be so hastily rejected, " I must be going, but I have not got my reward yet." He stooped down, and gave his little sister a kiss, and nodding a good-night to the others, he left the room.

" Will she never be coming ! " exclaimed Dora ; and thoughtful Gertrude put the cosy on the tea-pot, and had just finished cutting some bread, when the school-room door was thrown open and a foot-man announced—Miss Selby ! leaving the lady standing on the threshold of the door. Agnes had that pleasant easy manner, which never for an instant made her feel awkward ; and so holding out her hand to Gertrude, she said, with her usual grace, " You are Gertrude, are you not ? Will you introduce me to your brother and sisters ? "

The kind words, the gentle manner, and the perfect ease, at once reassured Gertrude, and the other introductions were speedily gone through.

It was already late, and soon after tea the servant knocked for Conny ; Harry and Dora played at drafts for about half-an-hour, and then went off

to bed, and Agnes found herself alone with Gertrude, who was to be her sole pupil, the others having a daily governess ; and it was more with the view of combining in one person a companion and teacher for her daughter than from any knowledge of Agnes' efficiency, that Lady Hay had chosen one so young for the superintendence of Gertrude. Agnes was anxious to know more about her pupil—besides the girl's face interested her, so she began: "Gertrude, how old are you?"

"Sixteen" was the answer, then with a sigh, "I *do* wish I were eighteen."

"Why?" inquired Agnes with astonishment, "I suppose," with a smile, "you are tired of the school-room?"

"Not exactly, but I—I was thinking that if I were eighteen I should then be sometimes with mamma, and learn to love her, I don't mean—seeing Agnes' face looking rather shocked—that I do not love mamma, but you see I am with her so seldom. She thinks till girls are out they should be kept in the school-room as much as possible, the fact is (and Gertrude lowered her voice a little), I am rather afraid of mamma, and cannot tell her everything as I would wish, but now (and her face brightened) it does not matter so much because you have come here, and you can tell me what is right—you will be my friend, will you not?"

Ashley Park and its Occupants. 35

Agnes thought it hardly right in her own heart that she should take the mother's place, but she could not resist the pleading face at her side, so she said, "I hope, indeed, we shall be great friends, and we can only be true ones if we tell each other our sorrows as well as our joys, in token of our friendship."

"There is one thing," continued Gertrude, "I want you to ask about, because it troubles me so often, it is about Conny. You know she is not our own little sister, only the little girl our stepfather, Sir Andrew Hay, had by his first marriage, so it is natural that mamma does not love her so much as she loves us, but I sometimes think she misjudges Conny. There is a gentleman here, who often comes to visit—we call him Cousin Charles, I don't know that he really is our cousin, but we call him so—he is a great friend of Horace's. Well, he takes a good deal of notice of Conny when he sees her, and often comes up to the school-room to play with her and tease her, I must say (said Gertrude laughing) they do coquette a little together; but Conny is such a child, and besides she so seldom sees people, it is natural she should be flattered with whatever attention is paid to her. Mamma says she is very forward, and hardly ever allows her now to come downstairs, and she has got Sir Andrew to think the same. The child is quite miserable, for

besides liking Cousin Charles, she cannot bear to be spoken crossly to, and when mamma does so, the big tears come into her eyes. Then she is called spoilt, and only the other day her nurse was sent away, who had always been with her, because she was said to give way to Conny too much ; of course the child is miserable, and I cannot bear to see her so."

Gertrude's eyes were fast filling. Agnes scarce knew what to say ; it was hardly her place to condemn the mother to the child, so she replied, "We must try and make Conny happy here, she has such a sweet little face, it reminds me of a picture I once saw called 'The Angel of Love.' It was a fair bright creature, with Conny's hair and eyes, that always hovered over those who possessed the beautiful quality of 'Love,' and when I was very small, I used to call it my little angel sister, for I had always longed to have a sister younger than myself." From this point Agnes launched into some reminiscences of her childhood, which she thought would interest Gertrude. Before they separated for the night, Agnes knelt down and offered up a prayer of guidance for them both, and as Gertrude lay in her little white bed, she felt she was not disappointed in Agnes Selby.

This was Agnes Selby's first introduction to her new home. Did the thought of Reginald Summers

never cross her? Did she stand by quietly and see her bright visions of last summer fade from her eyes like a dream, without experiencing some emotion, some regret? Did she never stop to consider what her former condition had been, and that she was now but a governess! Oh yes! all these thoughts, and many others, floated through her mind, but she tried, like a brave woman, to struggle against them—she condemned them as unprofitable. Here was her work, and she began her duties with a quiet, earnest, yet cheerful heart.

CHAPTER IX.

REGINALD SUMMERS PROVES HIMSELF TO BE A
HERO.

“ Wohlthätig ist des Feuers Macht,
Wenn sie der Mensch bezähmt, bewacht,
Und was er bildet, was er schafft,
Das dankt er dieser Himmelskraft;
Doch furchtbar wird die Himmelskraft,
Wenn sie der Fessel sich entrafft,
Ein hertritt auf der eignen Spur,
Die freie Tochter der Natur.”

Schiller.

“WELL, how did the pic-nic go off?” inquired Mrs. Summers of Margaret.

The meat had just been removed from the table,

so that Mrs. Summers calculated the moment well when she might hope to receive any particulars of the pic-nic in which Margaret, Carry, and Reginald had taken a part on the same day. She had given them fully time to rest, and partially to satisfy their appetites, which we know, judging by our own, are always so keen after a day spent in the open air.

"Oh!" answered Margaret rather slowly, "it was very nice."

"That 'very nice' sounds very like 'pretty well' I think," said Mr. Summers.

"It was a very good pic-nic," said Carry, "but I have enjoyed others better!"

"Well, for my part," exclaimed Reginald, "I think it was one of the most charming I ever was at. They know how to arrange things at Wellington Hall. The place so well chosen; you know mother the little wood near the lake, just the very place for a pic-nic. There was boating for those that liked it, and plenty of pretty walks for others who preferred *terra firma*. Then the party from Wellington Hall was so pleasant—a Mr Giles was there, a very clever man, and so agreeable."

"And oh!" chimed in Carry, "such a *lovely* girl. She is a niece of the Hydcs'—Miss Ellis—such *beautiful* hair and eyes, and so pleasant. She sang

one or two boating songs, and although she must know she is admired, was withal so unaffected."

"She certainly was very lovely," said Margaret, "and totally eclipsed all others there who had any pretensions to beauty."

"I cannot agree," put in Reginald; "I consider Fanny Hyde *much* prettier."

"Oh! Reggy!" exclaimed both girls, and gave each other a significant glance.

"Fanny looks just like a statue, so expressionless and so condescending," added Carry; "I *never* could see Fanny was pretty, although every one raves about her beauty. She is so tiresome too, she never talks about any one but herself."

"Well, Carry," retorted Reginald almost angrily, "I wish you were *half* as well informed as Miss Hyde; she can converse upon every topic. As for Miss Ellis, she has nothing but a pair of large blue eyes and a pretty figure, her face is totally devoid of animation. I sat beside her at lunch, and her conversation consisted in 'Beautiful weather, Mr. Summers, isn't it?' Not five minutes had elapsed before she said, 'One couldn't have had a more beautiful day for a pic-nic; could one, Mr. Summers?' A few minutes afterwards, 'I never was at such a charming pic-nic, but the weather is always everything; don't you think so, Mr. Summers?' and as for affectation," continued Reginald, warming with the

subject, "I am sure Miss Hyde sang at once when she was asked, whereas Miss Ellis had first to be persuaded and begged, and then professed never to be able to sing boat songs but on the water, and so roved about on the lake with young Hyde, thinking, no doubt, she looked liked a nymph, and piping so far away that one could hardly hear her."

"If Miss Ellis can sing better on the water, why shouldn't she do it? Fanny sings louder, if you like, but once or twice I heard her sing quite false. Besides, of course, she sang when she was asked, because *you* asked her," said Carry very pointedly.

"I don't know what you mean," answered Reginald angrily; but Mrs. Summers here put an end to any further controversy by proposing the ladies should adjourn to the drawing-room.

Carry was sorry in her heart to have been led to say more against Fanny than she had meant, but the fact was that both Margaret and Carry had observed that Reginald, who had at first taken no notice of Fanny Hyde, began to see her beauty and acknowledge her powers of fascination, and they felt, as sisters generally do, whose own affections are not yet engaged, a kind of jealousy, as regarded the object to which he chose to pay particular attention.

And what were Reginald's own feelings on the subject?

Gradually, gradually (as is but human, when the object of our affection is not before us) the memory of Agnes Selby had faded. At first, after his return from Italy, her image haunted him, but when in continual interview with one so beautiful as Fanny, he could not help making comparisons. He began to ponder the question, whether he admired dark or light beauties most ; whether Fanny's dark eyes or Agnes' violet ones were most attractive ; whether black hair or brown were preferable. He contrasted Fanny's handsome features, which seemed to have been moulded with the greatest care and finish under the sculptor's hands, with Agnes' more unevenly formed profile—in the one art seemed to have been at work, in the other nature. He forgot that whilst Fanny often conveyed the idea of a statue, Agnes' whole face beamed with life and intelligence ; he forgot while he listened to Fanny's lively conversation the charm of Agnes' calm, undemonstrative manner ; he forgot all this while he gazed on Fanny, and Agnes was not. He laughed at his former self, said he had been a fool, and but a boy when in Italy, forgetting it was hardly a year since. The old idea which had tormented him, when looking upon himself in the light of a beggar, had vanished after a conversation with Mr. Summers shortly after his return from Italy, when the former had given him to understand he should

never be left in a dependent position. He continued to read for the Bar, as Mr. Summers wished him to follow some profession. He was twice as light and gay, now that this matter of money had been removed from his mind, and perhaps Miss Hyde's vivacity suited his present state of mind.

Be it as it may, it was evident he did not see that Fanny laid herself out to please him, but he felt inwardly not a little flattered that a handsome girl always seemed pleased to converse with him, was never engaged when he asked her for a dance, and that whilst others found her cold and stiff, she was always both lively and agreeable towards him.

Carry took a pleasure in disparaging Fanny to him, whilst he was loud in extolling her merits, but she owned to herself, that she had gone a little too far on this occasion. So when the gentlemen came into the drawing-room, she thought it best to try and make up a little for her hastiness at dinner, and asked Reginald to sing a duet with her. He was quite as willing to take her proffered hand of reconciliation, and readily acquiesced.

"What shall we sing?" he asked.

"Oh! Mendelssohn's 'Gruss;' here it is."

Carry played the few opening bars, and then stopped.

"Did I not hear something?" They all listened attentively; yes, the sound came clearly again on

the night air, striking a panic to every heart that heard it.

"Fire! fire!" was the agonizing cry, "Help! help!"

To the party assembled in the drawing-room the sound conveyed a depth of horror. Reginald instantly quitted the apartment, but returned almost directly, only putting his head in at the drawing-room door to say :—

"Make your minds easy, this house is not on fire, or any near it. It is a farm at some distance. I am going to see if I can be of any service," and shutting the door again, he strode out of the Hall entrance in the direction of the burning house with the utmost rapidity. A crowd was quickly collecting round a building enveloped in flames. As is generally the case, few were rendering any assistance; they were gaping at the cruel consuming flames, with eyes and mouths wide open, comforting the owner by telling him the great loss he would incur if his property were burnt to the ground. As Reginald came up to the scene of action, a cry was heard, and a woman rushed out of the house, her face pale as ashes, wringing her hands, wailing in accents of the most utter misery and despair, "The child! the child! will no one save the child?"

Reginald seemed the only one present who

caught the whole meaning of these words, who understood the dreadful reality it conveyed—a child was in that burning house, in that house whose roof threatened every moment to fall in, burying all else with it. Already people were standing at a respectful distance from the scene of devastation, so as to be out of harm's way.

Reginald considered but one moment. It was his duty to rescue the child, come what might ; so he only asked hurriedly of the woman, "Where can I find this child?" and received her answer, "Up the staircase, the room to the right hand side," then with a "God help me!" he dashed into the house, notwithstanding the shout that was raised by the bystanders as they saw him disappear up the burning staircase, imagining him to be bent on self-destruction. But he had reached the room in safety, although almost choked with the smoke, and unable to see a step before him. Only a smothered cry from one corner of the room guided him in the right direction, where crouching in a corner, with her night-dress on, cowered a little maiden. Her large eyes were dilated with fear, and her whole frame shook convulsively. Reginald tore off his coat, and threw it round her, so that her light attire might not subject her to danger. It seemed impracticable to descend the staircase, and bright flames were already making their way

into the apartment. Seizing the child in his arms, Reginald went to the window and called loudly for a ladder. His reappearance seemed to revive the crowd. He was well-known and very popular in the country round about, and was always looked up to and respected as son and heir of the master. A ladder was standing at no very great distance, and it was placed against the window in an almost incredible short space of time. Reginald began carefully to descend with his burden, but there was still danger; any moment they might be struck by some falling beam. Anxiously, breathlessly, the bystanders looked on. Now, they are but two steps from the ground. How the fire burns! Oh, what a crash! The roof has fallen in, and all else has given way with it! God have mercy on them! Are they buried beneath the ruins? Will the bereaved parents of the child never more feel the clinging of those little arms? Never again hear the patter of those little feet? Will the gallant boy who strove to rescue her never again see the dear ones he loves? Never live to hear from many lips blessings poured down on him for his courage? Yes, God be praised! Reginald has but just time to spring to the ground when the tottering roof gives way, and as if to show how mercifully Providence had even to the last intervened between them and death, a burning beam falls so close that

they can feel the glow it sheds around it. He is almost dragged to a position of safety by the impetuous crowd, who do not cease to pour blessings on his head. But now the actual danger is past ; his strength is fast giving way ; and whether it is from the pain a burn in his arm causes him, or that danger being past he no longer requires to exert himself, he has but just time to place the child into the arms of its grateful nurse, when he faints. Water was quickly procured from a neighbouring spring, and dashed on his face.

"I feel quite better now," he said, after a few minutes, "I don't know what made me so stupid as to faint, but I got so giddy all of a sudden ; I can walk to Lime Trees perfectly well," and he began to suit the action to the word. He had hardly gone a few steps when he turned back.

"Where is the nurse and that child?" he inquired of a labourer.

"They have gone to see if they can lodge in yonder farm-house," was the answer.

"Go, and tell them they can come to Lime-Trees."

The nurse and child soon overtook Reginald, but when they reached Lime-Trees, the latter insisted on going into the drawing-room alone, as if nothing had happened, first giving instructions as he passed to a bewildered maid, to show both

nurse and child to a bedroom. His extreme pallor when he entered the drawing-room, notwithstanding his precautions, frightened them all, and Mr. Summers exclaimed, "What is the matter, Reginald, has anything happened?"

"Oh, I'm all right," he answered, "leave me to Margaret's and Carry's care, mother, for I want you to look after a little girl who has been turned out of the farmhouse that was burnt to the ground. She has a nurse with her; I told Bennet to look after them, but she is sure to forget half of what is wanted."

Though hardly understanding the meaning of Reginald's words, Mrs. Summers left the room to look after things herself. Margaret brought Reginald a glass of wine, which he did not refuse to drink, and then at Mr. Summers' request he told them all briefly what had happened, touching very lightly on the part which he had taken in the proceedings, and it was not till Mrs. Summers entered, and going up to him said, "Oh, my boy, I have been hearing such accounts of your bravery, the nurse is quite overwhelmed with gratitude, and several labourers have been already to inquire how you are." Not till Mrs. Summers, who could not refrain from doing so, had given them all a full account of the whole affair; not till then did they fully understand how his life had been imperilled.

Carry turned very pale, and Margaret shuddered a little, even Mr. Summers seemed affected, and wiped his spectacles two or three times; Reginald alone pretended not to hear the details, only muttering now and then an impatient "Pshaw." When Mrs. Summers had finished, he inquired if she had found out who the child was. "Yes, the daughter of a Sir Andrew Hay, I believe, she had been sent to this farmhouse for change of air, whilst the family were on a tour on the Continent, chiefly on account of the eldest daughter's health. You must write to them at once Margaret and tell them, as they may hear of this fire and be alarmed, their child is safe—news travel so fast. The nurse can give you their address, they are at Wiesbaden. Of course, until we hear further particulars from them, the child must remain here."

"I am going to bed," yawned Reginald, "I am so tired, I don't intend to get up for a fortnight."

"Oh, indeed you shall," laughed Carry, "or I'll splash you with cold water."

"You had better not," returned Reginald menacingly, as he left the room, "or I shall think I am having nightmare, and you are a ghost, in which case I shall fling the first convenient article at your head, and won't be answerable for the consequences."

CHAPTER X.

A DISCOVERY.

"So staff in hand, we sallied forth,
And o'er the uplands clomb our way ;
Where east, and west, and south, and north,
A world of gorgeous beauty lay."

Moultrie.

IT was the first of September, one of those glorious days we often see in the beginning of autumn ; the leaves of most of the trees still bright and green, looking as if they wished to appear in full beauty before they withered and dropped, leaving the bare trees to stretch out their naked arms helplessly towards the sky. The little rivulets were sparkling in the morning sun, and chattering glibly as they flowed along ; the sky was bright and clear, the air not tainted with the raw chill of autumn, nor laden with an oppressive summer-heat, but fresh and exhilarating, just the kind of morning on which, if you were a schoolboy, you would like to break forth from the schoolroom, and exclaim as you rushed into the open air, " I am free ! free as yonder bird on its bough ! "

It was a few days after the fire described in our last chapter. Reginald, as he walked down the

avenue leading from Lime Trees seemed also to feel the general effect of the weather. His step was as light as if he trod upon air, and he exclaimed in a bright joyous tone to the little companion at his side, "We couldn't have had a better day for our walk, could we Conny?" These two had grown great friends since the fire.

Reginald had always been fond of children, but this one interested him particularly. He liked to watch her large thoughtful eyes, or to listen to her merry prattle, and she in her turn was devoted to him, and accompanied him everywhere. No answer had as yet been received to Margaret's letter from her relatives, but she seemed quite happy where she was, and indeed she could hardly have failed to be so, for Reginald was always devising some new pleasure for her. One day it was a drive in the pony-carriage, the next a ride on the little shaggy Shetland pony, the third, as on the present occasion, a pretty walk.

"There, Conny, take care!" he exclaimed, as they crossed a stream by means of a narrow plank, "it would never do if you fell in, what would they all say at home if they heard you had been fished out of the stream like a little trout?"

Conny laughed, "Oh, I don't think there is any fear of that, we often go for long walks at home like this, and at one part there is just such a little

stream ; *I* never fell in, but one day Miss Selby's foot slipped, and she wet all her boots !”

Miss Selby ! how well Reginald knew the name ! Oh, nonsense, it could not be the same ! Yet something tempted him to ask, “Who is Miss Selby, I have never heard you speak of her ?”

“She is Gertrude's governess,” answered Conny readily, “and so pretty ; oh, I will show you her picture !” She drew from her pocket a photograph, underneath it were written these words in a pretty lady-like hand, “To my dear little Conny, from Agnes Selby.”

The name would not have needed to be there to convince Reginald that it was the same, that wavy hair, those soft loving eyes ; he had never but once in his life seen a person like that photograph. As if by magic, the hotel in Italy rose before him—the garden, the walks, the last evening on the balcony, and the fair figure that had stood by his side. But had not Conny said Miss Selby was a governess. Miss Selby, the heiress of Kingsley Hall ! it could not be true. “Conny,” he said, “you surely must be making some mistake, Miss Selby cannot be a governess !”

“Why not ?” answered Conny wonderingly, opening her large blue eyes, “Miss Selby is Gertrude's governess, and oh,” she added enthusiastically, “you should only hear her singing,

Cousin Charles says he never heard any one sing like her."

"Who is Cousin Charles?" Reginald asked again.

"Cousin Charlie—oh, he is just Cousin Charlie ; what funny questions you ask. Do you know," she continued laughing, "why I like you so much? You are so like Cousin Charles, he plays with me too."

"And he likes Miss Selby's singing," Reginald went on, not particularly interested to know in what points he resembled this unknown Cousin Charles.

"Oh, yes, so much ; Gertrude says he never takes his eyes off her, when she sings."

"Oh!" Reginald began to whistle, it was a favourite habit of his when he was thinking on any subject very particularly. He had come to a very sudden conclusion in his own mind, and this without any proof or evidence whatsoever, "Cousin Charles, I see, *alias* that man I saw in the garden in Italy with her ; well, all's well that ends well. I believe I could now wish Miss Selby joy of her marriage, and attend at the ceremony, without so much as changing colour ; how we alter as we grow older." He stopped whistling, and turned to chat to his little companion about indifferent subjects. They did not retrace their steps till almost lunch time ;

Conny was tired and hungry with her long walk, and they were both glad when a bend of the long avenue at last brought them in sight of Lime Trees.

"Here comes Carry running out to meet us," exclaimed Reginald. "Well, Mademoiselle, what's in the wind?" as Carry reached them.

"Oh, I only wanted to tell Conny the news first. Papa has just had a letter from Sir Andrew Hay, written almost immediately on receipt of Margaret's. Fancy, Conny, from what your papa says, he and the rest of your people must already be in London; they were to start directly, and they wish you to go to them as soon as possible."

She had expected Conny to be in raptures, as she herself would have been, had she been long separated from all at home, and now suddenly had the prospect of seeing them so soon again; but the little girl looked at Reginald, "I am so sorry to go away," she said, "I shall be very glad to see Gertrude, and Miss Selby, and Cousin Charlie again, but (with great energy), *do* come with me."

Reginald laughed, "What, little one, afraid you would be eaten up by those great big giants you are so fond of reading about, if I were not there to protect you? However, after all, I think I will come with you."

"Reggy!" exclaimed Carry, "how can you tell the child such nonsense."

"Begging your pardon, Carry, it is not nonsense ; I was never so serious in my life, I shall take Conny up to London. Conny, how far is it from London to your place?"

"I don't know exactly, I think about two hours."

"Oh! that will do beautifully, we will get to London about four—to your home at six, and I can come back by the evening train to London. Forbes has been asking me for the last year to go and see him, it will be a very good opportunity. I shan't write or telegraph to him, or anything, but just take him by surprise ; we had better start the day after to-morrow."

"Oh! Reggy, and the day after to-morrow they all come to lunch here from Wellington Hall ; we shall not know how to entertain them if you are not there!"

"Well then you must learn! It will be a good opportunity for you to exercise your entertaining faculties."

"And Fanny is coming," added Carry reproachfully.

But Reginald paid no attention to this last appeal, only replying—

"I must go and find my father, and tell him."

Mr. Summers' consent was readily given, and the journey arranged for the day Reginald wished it. The truth was Reginald had a kind of curiosity to

see Miss Selby again, and made himself believe that, by thus doing, he would give himself the best proof possible that he felt quite indifferently towards her, besides, he argued—

“I am fond of Conny, and should like to see her family; and then Forbes has been bothering me for a visit for such a long time; I shall kill two birds with one stone—gratify myself, and please him.”

CHAPTER XI.

A RECOGNITION.

“We met, 'twas in a crowd.”

IT was after dinner; the gentlemen had just left their wine to join the ladies in the drawing-room. Sir Andrew had already crossed the passage and opened the door. What a glow of light, warmth, and comfort was revealed within! It had often been said by visitors, and truly, that the drawing-room of Ashley Park was one of the most comfortable they had ever been in. The large bow-windows were shaded with bright green velvet curtains—sofas and chairs of all descriptions, from low, soft, easy ones, to comfortable sized arm-chairs, were covered with the same costly material.

Small tables, so indispensable to ladies, were scattered about the room, invitingly placed within any one's reach, for work materials, &c. There were a good many pretty ornaments, besides, plenty of photo albums, and books of rare engravings in every direction. The walls were hung with many beautiful pictures, but no portraits, as Sir Andrew disliked a family exhibition in the drawing-room. Hence there were only to be found masterpieces of art, such as could afford every one pleasure, and which had been collected at different times by different generations of Hays. Here is Raphael's Madonna del Sisto, at the other side Titian's Sleeping Venus, a little further a familiar sea-piece of Ballantyne's greets us, and near the window can be recognised Rosa Bonheur's well-known group of horses. By this time the gentlemen had all entered. Sir Andrew, with some other gentlemen, strolled up to the fire-place, where a bright log fire was burning, for although it was only the month of September, the evenings were cold and chilly. Sir Andrew is a fine looking man, a little past middle age, about six foot in his stockings. His whiskers and moustache are of a dark reddish brown, now slightly tinged with grey, his forehead high, his eyes light blue, with a good-humoured twinkle in them, in fact his whole aspect denotes the man with whom the world has dealt

kindly, who has never known what the hard struggle of life means ; and such is indeed the case. The eldest son of a rich baronet with few children, Sir Andrew was left by his father's death, at the age of twenty-six, with a handsome fortune ; he then sold out of the army and went to live at Ashley Park. When he was thirty-six, he married a school friend of his sister's, a girl about eighteen, by whom he had a large family, but they all died except the youngest, Constance. In giving birth to this youngest his wife died, and, when Conny was about six years old, Sir Andrew married again, this time a woman more suited to his age, a widow, Mrs. Lee. She had a large family, but the latter suffered in no wise from this second marriage, as Sir Andrew proved, contrary to all fairy tales, a kind and indulgent stepfather. Mr. Lee had left his children tolerably well-off, so that they were not wholly dependent on Sir Andrew's generosity.

Let us however digress no further, but return to the drawing-room. Horace Lee, to whom we have had a previous introduction, made his way with difficulty to the tea-table where Gertrude presided. This was an innovation since Agnes' introduction into the family. Miss Selby, who was a great favourite with Lady Hay, had been asked to join their circle in the drawing-room every evening. She begged that Gertrude might be allowed to ac-

company her, thinking it would make the girl less shy with strangers, and rouse her a little. Gertrude had not been feeling well for a long time, and at last, at the doctor's instigation, a tour abroad had been undertaken on account of her health. Ashley Park had been shut up, and a two months' wandering on the Continent had done wonders for her. She was seated now at the tea-table, looking very pretty and simple in her long white muslin trimmed with blue, and she executed her office with a grace wholly devoid of affectation. Several gentlemen and ladies were clustered together near this spot, so Horace could not make his way without considerable difficulty.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Selby!" as he tramped on that lady's dress, who was seated talking to a gentleman not personally known to us, but whom we have often heard mentioned as "Cousin Charlie!"

"I say, Gertrude, do give me a cup of tea for mother, not so much sugar, that's right; what a journey I have to make back to her!" as he crossed the room where Lady Hay was seated; tall and stately, with finely cut features, but a rigid and cold expression in her grey eyes, reclining on a green velvet sofa, which displayed to full advantage her rich mauve silk covered with Honiton lace. Her whole face brightens as her son approaches. He

is the only one of her children on whom she lavishes unvarying tenderness, and nothing does she deem too good for this her first-born! "Mother, here's your tea, what a work I have had to get it."

"Yes, I daresay, I don't think it is good for Gertrude to be placed in such a prominent position."

"Oh! bother! she's all right, and makes excellent tea; besides I am very much obliged to her for keeping the people over there, I want to talk to you alone. By the by, do you know what day next Tuesday-week is?"

"I never can remember dates, Horace, some day in September—I suppose that's enough."

"In this case it doesn't happen to be enough, but since you don't remember I'll tell you; my birth-day!"

"Oh! really! well, how time flies!"

"Yes, but for all that, the days come round again; I'll tell you what, mother, we haven't had a dance for ages. My birth-day is a good excuse, I intend to have one!"

"My dear Horace!" exclaimed his mother aghast, "Sir Andrew"——

"Sir Andrew is all right, I spoke to him. He said he had no objection if you could manage it (and you *must*). I have set my heart on it, not later than next week either, for after that Charlie goes away, and I cannot afford to lose him. He is in-

valuable at a dance. Come, I'll even make it Wednesday if you like!"

"But my dear Horace!" expostulated Lady Hay, "we have been at home but two days, and oh dear! that reminds me, I got a letter this morning, which I have not yet had time to read, no doubt to tell us something about Conny's arrival. Now, when I think of it, Sir Andrew said she was to be sent as soon as possible; I should not wonder if she arrived to-night. There is still a train. I had quite forgotten all about it, what shall I do. Of course the carriage has not been sent to the station: I hope it is not too late, do ring the bell!" But, before Horace could obey, a loud peal at the front-door bell started them all, and almost directly the drawing-room-door was thrown open, the footman announced "Mr. Summers and Miss Constance," and Conny walked in followed by Reginald.

Lady Hay instantly rose and went to meet Reginald, welcoming him with the gracious manner she always assumed towards gentlemen.

"Mr. Summers I believe! the gentleman to whom we are indebted for having saved our little Constance; I do not know how to thank you. How very kind of you to have brought her to us."

"Not at all! I have a visit to pay in London, so thought I would come so far with Conny,

but I am afraid we have been longer in reaching our destination than I thought ; I must return immediately to catch the night-train for London."

"Now don't talk nonsense, old fellow," exclaimed a familiar voice behind him, and, turning round, he saw Horace Lee, an old school-friend, whom he had not seen for years. "Summers ! I should have known you anywhere, though you have grown a good bit taller since last we met. Who would have thought of seeing you here ?"

"Do you know Mr. Summers, Horace ?" interposed Lady Hay.

"Know him ! I should just think so ! Now Summers you are not going away to-night, nor to-morrow, you are going to stay for our dance next week (giving his mother a triumphant glance) —you are the very fellow—some good fortune has brought you here !"

Lady Hay eagerly seconded her son's invitation, and Sir Andrew, who now came forward, was no less urgent. Reginald, nothing loth, acceded willingly enough. He declined all refreshment, save a cup of tea, saying he had dined in London at four o'clock. Meanwhile, Conny, after a rather warmer embrace than usual from Lady Hay, and a good deal of fondling on the part of Sir Andrew, had rushed up to Gertrude and Cousin Charlie, both of whom hardly knew how to make enough

of her. Conny seemed to have forgotten all shyness, and rattled on.

"Oh! Cousin Charlie, doesn't he look nice, I like him next best to you."

"Indeed! then he must be very nice; take care or I shall be jealous!"

"I asked him to come with me, and he said he would, wasn't it kind of him?"

Cousin Charlie here interrupted her abruptly with—

"Conny, have you seen Miss Selby yet?"

Agnes started on hearing her own name, she was sitting very near to the little group, but with her face turned in the other direction. She now addressed herself half to Constance, half to Cousin Charlie.

"Yes, I think Conny has quite forgotten me!"

"That would be quite impossible," came the answer, very low, from the gentleman next her, but Agnes heard it, and flushed crimson. She addressed herself this time pointedly to Conny, then, turning round to her neighbour, she said—

"Mr. Bell, might I ask you to make room between us for Conny?"

He looked evidently "put out" by the change in her manner, but tried to answer in his usually bright tone. "Oh! I know what will answer best—Miss Constance shall sit on my knee; will that please

you, eh Conny?" It seemed so, for she scrambled up on his knee directly, and Agnes heard, as in a dream, their voices beside her.

No doubt each of my readers has been wondering to himself or herself what Agnes Selby's sensations were on seeing Reginald Summers again. When the door opened, and the footman announced "Mr. Summers!" every one had turned round with a kind of expectation, but Agnes alone knew whom to expect. She felt a firm conviction that Mr. Summers could be no other than the one. She had not known where Conny was staying, either not having heard the name, or not noticed it, but at that moment she had felt beyond a doubt that Reginald,—Reginald, whom she had thought of so long, whom she had in vain striven to forget, would stand in that same drawing-room with her. It was quite natural. Her thoughts had been all that evening full of Italy. A question asked by Mr. Charles Bell had occasioned it.

"Miss Selby, were you ever on the Continent?"

She had replied "Yes" several times, but that last year her greatest wish had been realized, for the first time she had seen Italy. This had led to many questions regarding place and scenery. Agnes had remembered, almost with a start, that on that very day, a year ago, she and her aunt had arrived at the small hotel in Italy. When the door flew

open, she felt she expected something, and when the footman announced "Mr. Summers !" she calmly prepared to see Reginald. Calmly if we might judge by her outward appearance ; she would not have been human if her pulse had not beat quicker than usual. Her first feelings, on seeing him, were those of unalloyed joy. She saw him once more, and he could not fail soon to see her. She was wakened out of this pleasant dream by Mr. Charles Bell's voice speaking to her in an unusual familiar tone ; it annoyed and vexed her at that particular moment more especially, and now, that she was once more left to herself, feelings of a different nature supplanted the former happy ones. Not as formerly could she and Reginald meet on the same footing. Reginald was guest in this house, she, governess ; a whole long year had elapsed since their parting. Though she still remembered him, he might—indeed it was most likely—he had forgotten her ; so buried was she in her own thoughts that she did not notice Conny slip off Cousin Charlie's knee, and return across the room with Reginald, to introduce him to Gertrude. Not till she heard Horace's voice saying, "Come, Conny, you don't do the thing properly, allow me to undertake the introductions," did she perceive Reginald was at no great distance from her.

"Mr. Summers, my sister, Miss Lee ;" then

turning to Agnes, "Miss Selby, may I introduce Mr. Summers to you," and almost before she was aware of it Reginald stood before her.

They both started. Agnes grew crimson, and if Reginald had prided himself upon being able to treat her with utter indifference, he had certainly miscalculated his powers. In the first bustle of entering the room, where so many people were assembled, he had not recognised Agnes. Afterwards the thought had struck him for a moment, "I wonder where Miss Selby is?" but Horace's lively talk about old school friends, &c., had completely banished the subject from his mind, till he found himself standing face to face with her. For once in his life his presence of mind forsook him; he stood still for a moment, then bowed, stammering out all the time something incoherent about having had the pleasure of knowing Miss Selby before. It was well Agnes, now quite herself, came to his aid.

"I think I have met Mr. Summers before on the Continent, it is strange how the people one has seen abroad turn up again."

"Yes, so it is," said Horace, "I had no idea you knew Miss Selby, Summers; but since my introduction there was of no use, allow me to introduce you to a friend of mine, 'Mr. Summers, Mr. Bell;'" and Reginald found himself bowing to a good-

looking young man of about twenty-three, with fine brown eyes, and a quantity of nut-brown hair, brushed straight off his forehead.

“That is Cousin Charlie,” put in Constance.

Yes it was Cousin Charlie, but not the man he had seen in the garden in Italy. Mr. Bell bowed coldly ; if no one else had noticed Agnes’s start and Reginald’s confused manner, *he* had, and thought with reason that commonplace acquaintances who had seen each other but casually abroad would not have so met. Agnes’ bright, happy manner when talking of her tour in Italy now struck him ; she had mentioned that they had only made the acquaintance of one English gentleman abroad, who was staying in the same hotel. Then her silence that evening since Reginald’s entrance into the room. Surely, if she had only recognised a fellow-traveller she would have said so openly when he entered. All these things made Mr. Charles Bell form his own opinion on the subject, and from that moment he took a dislike to Reginald, and regarded him henceforth in the light of a rival.

CHAPTER XII.

NO REST FOR REGINALD SUMMERS.

"Quiet, close, and warm,
Sheltered from all molestation,
And recalling by their voices
Youth and travel."

Longfellow.

"SUMMERS, will you come and have a cigar in the smoking-room?" said Horace Lee, as every one began to separate for the night.

"With all my heart," answered Reginald, "Nothing is more to my taste than a weed of an evening."

"You will come too, Charlie, of course," remarked Horace.

"No, Horace, thank you," replied that individual rather haughtily, "I will leave you and your friend alone to-night."

Horace looked surprised, but said nothing but "Good night then," and led the way to the smoking-room.

A very comfortable room Reginald thought. It was long and narrow, the walls of dark green paper, and the furniture covered with brown leather. On the table lay the newspapers of the day, and a bright fire was blazing in the grate, one of those nice little red-fires which seem to breathe

warmth and comfort, lightening up the whole room with their glow.

"I say old fellow, I don't think we need light the gas, this is much more sociable."

"Much," responded Reginald warmly, and he thought he had seldom been so completely at his ease, or so comfortable, as when seated in the large arm chair, drawn close to one side of the fire, Horace Lee on the other, each with a cigar in his mouth; the light of the fire so bright that everything in the room could be seen by the soft glow it shed. Between the puffs of their cigars, Horace and Reginald talked at their ease of old days and old associations. Each seemed to remember something the other had forgotten; they laughed as heartily over old schoolboy scrapes, as if they had been but of yesterday; they talked of what had happened since, of what their future plans were. Then gradually both dropped into silence, and puffed away steadily, each was unwilling to be the first to propose a move. At length the silence was broken by Horace, who had been gazing into the fire, and who now gave the conversation quite a different turn to what it had been.

"I cannot make out what has come over Charlie, usually he is the jolliest fellow alive," then suddenly turning to Reginald, "now Summers tell me openly what you think of him."

"Oh, I can scarcely judge yet," was the evasive answer.

"Come, that won't do, you know you may tell me what you like, it doesn't matter a pin his being my friend, I am sure you think he is a horrid, haughty old bear! confess!"

"Well," acquiesced Reginald, rather unwillingly, "I did think his manner strange, but he is stunningly good-looking. I presume he is the 'Cousin Charlie' Conny is always speaking of?"

"Yes, the little monkey; she thinks nobody is like him, it is a wonder she condescends to patronize you."

"How did you come to know him?" resumed Reginald, then added, "one thing I must say, he *has* got a splendid pair of eyes."

"Don't commit yourself Summers," laughed Horace, "I was just thinking how like your eyes were to his, but if anything you had the advantage. But to answer your question how I first came to know him, let's see! oh, yes, I know now. Two years ago, just a few months after mother's second marriage, we were in London for the winter. We were very gay, asked out almost every night chiefly to stupid dinner-parties. Once or twice we were asked to small dancing-parties at a Mrs. Geoffreys'. Very pleasant they were, and the Geoffreys kind, hospitable people, who, having no children of their

own, had always a quantity of young folk staying with them, and it was for their benefit these dances were given. Amongst other young men whom I frequently met at the Geoffreys was Charlie Bell ; he was always to be seen in the thick of every thing, a great favourite with ladies, and the very fellow to put spirit into whatever was going on. One evening, however, I remember the dancing got on slowly, the ladies either would not or could not dance. I knew very few of them too, and did not care to be introduced to any more. At last I took refuge beside the piano, and continued to watch Miss Jones' fingers dashing over the notes, wishing it were a late enough hour for me to make an excuse, and depart. I was just making a most pitiful attempt to suppress a yawn when I saw Mrs. Geoffreys coming towards me. She came up saying smilingly, 'Oh, Mr Lee, I am afraid you haven't had much dancing to-night, I will get you a partner.' I tried to explain I did not wish for one, for Mrs. Geoffreys always made a point of introducing you to some forlorn girl whom nobody would dance with, but she would not listen, and before I had had time to think about it I saw her returning accompanied by a lanky overgrown-looking girl, hardly in her teens, I should say, to judge by her appearance. One of those horrid young Misses who would either not talk at

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all, or jerk out now and then some incoherent sentence, as if they were afraid to hear their own voice, and when you waltz with them they have a trick of hanging upon you, or dragging, or something equally disagreeable. If it had been a square dance, it would not have been so bad, but just then, as if to mock me, a brilliant galop was started. I got into a cold perspiration, and was beginning to try and get resigned to my fate as each step brought Mrs. Geoffreys nearer to me, when I heard a voice behind me. I turned round, it was Charlie Bell.

“ ‘ Mr. Lee, I say if you don’t wish to be ticketted for that girl, who has had a fall with every partner she has tried, come with me, I can yet save you, there is no time to lose.’ So saying, he half dragged me out of the crowd, I feeling all the time intensely relieved, and yet aware I was falling into Mrs. Geoffreys’ black books. Charlie Bell never allowed me to stop, till almost out of breath we found ourselves safe out of the drawing-room, and down the stairs, then he exclaimed—

“ ‘ You should really thank me, Mr. Lee, for my timely rescue, I took compassion on you ; there is the most wretched set of dancers to-night I ever saw, and if you are, like me, very fastidious about your partners, you must have passed a miserable evening. My good aunt seems to me to have

hired a large boarding-school of girls to-night for our especial entertainment.'

"I said, if Mrs. Geoffreys were his aunt, I hoped he would make my peace with her. He answered he would manage that, and by this time we were outside the house, walking up and down smoking, for Charlie had let himself and me out by the front door.

"He said, 'You see I make myself quite at home here, the Geoffreys are almost the only relatives I have, and they allow me to come here and do as I like.'

"I don't know how it came about, but in our conversation that evening he told me by degrees all about himself. His father, it seems, was a clergyman at some place in the south of England. Both his parents died when he was young, and left him nothing. His uncle, who soon after returned from India, was himself not very rich; he and Charlie's other guardian, a Mr. Turner, agreed when the boy was six years old, to board him with a curate, at some very trifling cost. Charlie says he never spent such a wretched time in his life. The curate was mean and stingy, and very strict besides. It was quite a windfall for him, when one day, a lady came to see him, when he was about fourteen, and informed him that she was his mother's step-sister, but as she had been for years

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in India with her husband, she had lost sight of her sister, who was at no time a good correspondent. Mrs. Geoffreys (that was her name) had but lately returned, and received the news quite suddenly of the death of her step-sister and brother-in-law. Hearing they had left a child, she instantly went to see and claim him. Her husband was not very rich, and had besides heaps of nephews and nieces who were in some way dependent on him, but he was quite well enough off to help Charlie at least, so when he was a little older Mr. Geoffreys put him into his office, with a tolerable salary, and there he has remained, lodging somewhere in London. Though he likes the Geoffreys, he confessed to me that if he had had his own way he would have been a sailor, and does not much care for office-life. Poor fellow, I am so sorry for him in a way," continued Horace, "his uncle died a short time ago, and I think Charlie feels it, because he was his only very near relative, and one who, though making a mistake in placing him with the curate, had always tried to be kind to him. Well, since that night somehow, we got to be awful chums. I made him come to us very often, and he is devoted to the children here, and makes them call him 'Cousin Charlie,' because he says he has hardly any cousins of his own. Always, when he has a holiday, we ask him here,

but," resumed Horace, "these two years that I have known him I never saw him so queer as to-night, except, now I come to think of it, he has been strange all this visit, and I have taken an idea into my head, and am rather watching the little romance with interest!"

"What romance!" asked Reginald, almost sharply.

"Ah, I'll leave you to find that out for yourself. On second thoughts, however, if you can keep a secret I will tell you. Did you notice Gertrude's governess, Miss Selby? Well I am sure he has taken a fancy to her, the puzzle is that I can't make out if she cares for him or not. Entre-nous, it would be the very thing for him, though he is poor, and she also so at present, I believe there is every hope of her regaining her fortune. Sir Andrew, who knows all about her family very well, told me so only yesterday. It was a queer fancy of hers going out as governess. By-the-by Summers it strikes me when I introduced you to her that you said something about having known her."

"Yes," answered Reginald hastily, "I met her abroad last year. She was called away very suddenly," he added.

"Oh, ah! I remember hearing the whole story from mother once, just after she had engaged her; she was so glad to get a lady for Gertrude. Miss

Selby's father was taken suddenly very ill, when she was away; he recovered, but since then they have had quite a chapter of accidents, losing their fortune, &c. It seems queer that the Heiress of Kingsley Hall should be a governess!"

Reginald started violently. This was the third time he had heard her called the Heiress of Kingsley Hall, and each time under such different circumstances. Horace's few words conveyed much to him. The hasty departure from Italy, Miss Selby a governess. He forgot all connected with the mystery of the man in the garden—one thought absorbed him. The Heiress of Kingsley Hall, the spoilt child of a fond father, had not thought it beneath her to work for herself when fortune forsook her. If Agnes had ever thought Reginald Summers capable of despising her for so doing she had greatly wronged him; in that moment she seemed twofold dearer to him than she had ever been before, and now perhaps his prize was slipping fast, fast away from him into another man's grasp.

"Hullo! old fellow," exclaimed Horace, "what was that start for? you are the queerest fellow I ever saw. It struck me you did the same when you met her, and she also did not seem quite as composed as usual. Come! is there any mystery in that quarter? I am really very curious to know.

Summers I never saw you so floored in my life," Horace went on shouting with laughter, as he noticed Reginald's embarrassment and evident desire not to pursue the subject. "Come! make a clean breast of it to me, I am as true as flint, and won't betray anything."

"There is nothing to betray," said Reginald, a little tartly, "I met Miss Selby abroad, and we were both surprised at seeing each other again, I suppose."

"Come, Summers! you are as bad as Charlie. I believe Miss Selby is a witch, and has turned both your heads—you might as well confess at once you are *now*, or were once rather spoony on Miss Selby; and *I* telling you all the time of the romance with Charlie. Now, that I think of it, I noticed you were beginning to get of a greenish hue, and attributed it to the pale light we were sitting in! Oh, what fun! I declare it will be a case of 'Qui gagnera?'"

"Really, Lee, to hear you talk one would imagine you had been going in for a dish of penny sensational novels lately," Reginald answered rather contemptuously, "Miss Selby is nothing to me," (and all the time he said it, Reginald knew it to be false. He might have so spoken that morning before starting from Lime Trees, but if he

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had wished to forget Miss Selby he had certainly taken the wrong way to do it).

Horace only laughed, in his own mind still adhering firmly to his first belief, but he said aloud, "Now, old boy, don't get excited! The fire is nearly out; I think we had better be making a move. That beggar of a butler!" (as he opened the door, and looked out into the sombre passages) "has put out all the lights, if I don't pay him out to-morrow. Mercy!" (as the clock struck) "it's two o'clock. If mother hears footsteps, she will have the alarum-bell rung. Here is a candle, we will slip up the back staircase; this is your room Summers, I think," as he opened a door at the head of the staircase, "it goes by the name of the 'haunted-room' here, but you wont mind."

And if no ghost appeared to disturb Reginald Summer's rest, many and conflicting thoughts, old and new ideas, haunted his dreams.

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time as you may deem it best yourself to disclose it," &c.

For this letter he had been waiting some days before putting a certain plan into execution. Would it be a success? He thought so, he prayed so.

Reginald had reached Agnes. She had been watching him for some time in a kind of fluttering excitement. Was he really making his way up to her? but now that he was quite close to her she pretended to be looking the other way, and played with her fan. Hearing his voice beside her, a bright colour rose to her cheeks. She gave a little start, and turned round with apparent astonishment.

"Miss Selby allow me to put down my name for this waltz and galop?"

Horace, who had just stopped with his partner, laughed heartily, as he saw the two spinning round together, and caught a glimpse of Charlie Bell's face, on which a cloud like thunder was gathering. Poor Charlie! the past week had been one of fiery trial for him. After dinner, when all eagerness, he would hasten to claim a place beside Agnes. Reginald Summers was invariably to be found there. When Agnes sang it was Reginald who had naturally, as if he had been employed for the office, stationed himself near the piano, and turned over the leaves.

Charlie had said to Conny, "Take care, or I shall be jealous." The words now rang in his ears as if they had been a prophecy. He was wretched ; whilst Agnes's private diary informs us that this week has been such a happy one, she hardly knows why(?),—happier, if possible, than that memorable visit to Italy.

"Now, Miss Selby, I have to go ; I am engaged for this quadrille, but you will give me the next waltz, won't you ? Come, I will write it down to make sure," Reginald was saying, as Charlie Bell reached the spot where they were standing.

"Miss Selby," that individual said, ignoring Reginald's presence, "what dances can you give me ?"

"Well," she answered, blushing and laughing, "I believe my card is almost full ; but for this quadrille——"

"No !" he interrupted her, "I hate quadrilles. I see by your card you are not engaged for the next waltz."

"You are mistaken," Reginald answered for Agnes, "I was just going to write down my name, and thought you heard me say so."

Mr. Charles Bell grew pale with suppressed passion ; but he turned and addressed himself to Agnes : "But he has not written down his name, you see, so intentions need not hold. Miss Selby,

you know you are not engaged to Mr. Summers."

Reginald's brown eyes flashed, but he kept down his anger, as he always did with Charlie Bell. Somehow he had got into a way of treating that youth in a patronizing kind of manner, so he only laughed and said, "My dear fellow, you cannot know what you are saying. Come, you had better take the next quadrille, for it is a case of 'Hobson's choice.' I will just write my name down, however, to make sure of the waltz, and prevent mistakes for the future," so saying, he suited the action to the word, wrote down his name quickly on the card Agnes handed him, and walked off with the air of a conqueror to take his place in the quadrille that was forming, leaving Charlie Bell petrified.

Later on in the evening Horace managed to say to Reginald *en passant*, "I say, Summers, how did you manage to put Bell into such a fearful passion? I saw him just now standing alone, and offered to introduce him to any pretty girl he liked; he answered there was not a pretty girl in the room. When I said he should be ashamed of himself, and ought to take an example by you, who had been dancing the whole evening, he broke out into a most awful passion, called you nothing short of an ass and a fool, and said you cheated people out

of their partners. No further explanation would he vouchsafe ; what have you been doing ? ”

Reginald burst into a hearty fit of laughter. “ Oh ! he forgot himself once this evening, and I snubbed him, that is all. Do you know where Miss Selby is ? I am looking for her to take her down to supper.”

“ You will find her in that room with a gentleman,” answered Horace, a little maliciously.

“ Probably Charlie Bell pestering her with attention,” thought Reginald to himself ; “ what a wax he will be in when I break in upon the scene ! ” He entered the room pointed out by Horace, a small antechamber assigned for refreshments. It was empty, except for two figures. They seemed to be talking very earnestly together ; the lady’s head with its rich crown of golden brown hair was bent a little forward, as if drinking in every word that was uttered to her by her companion, a tall handsome man who was speaking very rapidly. Reginald just caught the words, “ There will be no need for your remaining any longer here.” It was not Charlie Bell. Reginald’s heart beat *very* fast, and so loud that he fancied he could hear it. The gentleman’s back was to him, but suddenly he turned. Alas ! poor Reginald ! Must the sword of anguish once more pierce your soul ? must you once more be forced to drink the cup of disap-

appointment to its very dregs? It could not be true; and yet he had often said to himself he would know that man anywhere—a man whose very existence he had forgotten in the intensity of his joy; the same, the very same he had seen in the garden with her. He was turning away he knew not whither, he did not care, when Agnes's voice arrested him—

“Mr. Summers, *do* allow me to introduce you to Mr. Travers, my brother-in-law; but I think you must have met him in Italy. Oh, no! now I remember. We left the next morning, after his arrival, quite suddenly. He came to tell me of my dear father's illness, and I was in such a state of mind I could not stay another hour away from him.”

Mr. Travers laughed. “Yes, I could not get her to believe it was not her fault her father was ill; but if I were then the messenger of evil tidings, I am to-day one of very joyful ones. Mr. Selby has regained a great part of his fortune. The bank which failed has managed to pick up wonderfully,—the accounts were at first greatly exaggerated.”

“That is indeed good news,” said Reginald. He had hardly yet recovered from his surprise. “Allow me to congratulate you, Miss Selby.”

“I must be off now,” said Mr. Travers. “I was

determined to be the bearer of the good tidings, but Alice made me promise to return by the night-train—good-bye, Agnes. I hope to have the pleasure of seeing you again, Mr. Summers; my sister-in-law has often told me of your great kindness to her in Italy.” He left the room, Agnes and Reginald alone. Then Reginald told her, he never afterwards knew why, all about his mistake in Italy, and he told her something else besides, but we will draw a veil over that. It was meant for no one to hear but the one loving heart. Only when Reginald parted from Horace Lee at his door that night, he said, “You guessed right, Horace. She has promised to take me for better or worse; but you will keep my secret a little longer, she does not wish every one to know about it yet.”

“I wish you joy, old boy,” was the answer. “But poor Charlie Bell, what will he say when he hears about it? Why, he will be fit to commit suicide.”

CHAPTER XIV.

CHARLIE.

"I might have striven, and striven in vain
Such visions to recall,
Well known and yet forgotten ; now
I see, I hear them all.
The present pales before the past,
Who comes with angel-wings ;
As in a dream I stand, amidst
Strange yet familiar things.

Procter.

THE news of Agnes's good fortune had spread like wild-fire through the house, and the next morning at breakfast congratulations poured in upon her. Lady Hay, who had always been fond of her sweet, pretty governess, would not hear of her remaining with them in that position until Christmas, as Agnes herself suggested, so as to give time to find a successor in her place.

"No," Lady Hay said, "stay with us just now as long as you like, but as our guest," and Agnes was fain to comply, especially as Reginald had postponed his journey homewards for a week at Horace's particular request. Poor Forbes, he was likely to wait some time for that long-promised visit now ! Charlie Bell was miserable, for although he did not quite guess at the real state of affairs,

he saw that his company was an utter matter of indifference to Agnes. He longed to rush from Ashley Park that very day, and bury his cares in the whirl of London life again, and still he lingered on, trying to make himself believe what he knew he had no foundation for, and hoping on against his better judgment. From the bottom of his heart he hated Reginald ; not that Agnes had ever shown more than commonplace courtesy towards Charlie, but the contrast now shone out too clearly for him not to see and fear. Her very tone seemed to change when she turned from him to speak to Reginald, her very face to wear a brighter expression.

As for Reginald, now that he had once won Agnes, he could treat everything else with equanimity. He allowed Charlie Bell at breakfast the pleasure of putting a pat of butter on her plate, and amused himself watching the face of appeal she now and then raised to him, especially when Charlie, elated by being allowed to proffer her more attention than usual without being interfered with, actually proposed to drive her out in the pony-carriage that afternoon. Horace had never admired Reginald so much in his life, and longed to get up and clap him on the back !

The word " pony-carriage " attracted Lady Hay's attention.

"Yes, Charlie ! that will do famously. I have just been proposing a plan to freshen us up a little after our yesterday's dissipation. After luncheon, we ladies will drive to that pretty view at the top of the hill. I thought the gentlemen would have preferred riding, but you can drive the pony-carriage if you like it better—of course, Horace, you and your friend Mr. Summers will join the riding party ?"

"Yes, mother," answered Horace, but having fully determined in his own mind that Charlie should *not* drive the pony-carriage, he added : "Charlie hates driving, he once told me so, he has only offered his services to oblige you. I am sure," he said, turning to Charlie in as sarcastic a tone as he could assume, "you are the most self-sacrificing fellow I ever saw. But, mother, why cannot the groom drive the pony-carriage, and so compromise matters ?"

And so it was finally arranged, greatly to Charlie Bell's discomfiture.

Reginald, who had seen through Horace's motive, leant back in his chair, and laughed heartily, taking the opportunity to say to him after breakfast, "Why did you not let the poor fellow drive the pony-carriage ? you don't think I am afraid he will run away with her ?"

"Oh ! not quite. But still I know how I should

feel if I liked a girl and another man was always following her."

"Oh! I don't care a pin, if the girl does not follow *him*," was the answer, "and I can afford to be generous now!" which remark caused Horace to stare at Reginald as if he had been a lunatic, and ejaculate, "Well, you are the rummiest chap I ever came across!"

After lunch, the pony-carriage and waggonette drove to the door. Agnes had begged so hard for little Constance to be allowed to accompany them, that Lady Hay had at last yielded, and so Agnes, Gertrude, Conny, and a Mrs. Stephens, who was staying in the house, stepped into the pony-carriage. Lady Hay, two Miss Lees (one of whom we have already seen dancing with Horace), a Mrs. Townsend, and a Miss Turner, took their places in the waggonette. The gentlemen were already mounted. Sir Andrew, Mr. Turner, and Captain Townsend, Reginald Summers, Horace Lee, and Charlie Bell. Much discussion ensued amongst the young ladies respecting these three last. Miss Lee was of opinion no one could be handsomer than her cousin Horace, Miss Turner admired Reginald's style of beauty, whilst the youngest Miss Lee declared Charlie Bell's eyes would rival any one's. They did indeed look very handsome—those three—mounted on their fine-looking horses,

and Agnes in her heart likened Reginald to a cavalier of old. The gentlemen were to take a different route from the ladies, and rather a longer one ; they waited, however, to see the ladies off, and as the pony-carriage and waggonette disappeared round the corner of the carriage drive, a violent waving of pocket-handkerchiefs ensued on the part of the gentlemen. Reginald's and Charlie Bell's waved furiously in the same direction, whilst Horace divided his attentions. The ride was anything but a pleasant one for the three young gentlemen. Sir Andrew, Mr. Turner, and Captain Townsend, galloped on in front, and in vain did Horace try to put his companions at their ease by keeping up a lively flow of words ; they all felt under a kind of constraint, and besides, Reginald and Charlie were both buried in their own thoughts. It was a relief to them all when they at last reached the chosen place of rendezvous. The ladies were already there, and Reginald joined Agnes and Miss Turner, who were looking for ferns. Charlie, not caring to play second fiddle, wandered off alone in quite a different direction. Soon he heard little feet coming pattering after him ; he turned, it was Conny.

"Cousin Charlie, may I come with you ?"

"Yes, if you like," was the ungracious reply.

"Not if you don't wish me," and her little face

fell, but Charlie by this time felt thoroughly ashamed of his conduct.

"Yes, Conny, I do want you very much!"

"Are you sad, Cousin Charlie? you never come to play with me now; has any one been unkind to you, mamma or Horace?"

"Oh no!" he answered, laughing, "what a silly child you are!"

"Could it be Reggie?" she continued, almost to herself. "Oh Cousin Charlie, Reggie hasn't made you angry, has he?" He did not reply. "If he has, I will never speak to him again." He bent down and kissed her.

"Conny, you love me, don't you?"

"Yes," she answeredly wonderingly.

"Then you are the only one, every one else hates me," he added almost bitterly. She was half frightened at his vehemence, but he said more gently, "Don't mind me, you little darling, I am a cross old fellow," and then he changed the subject and talked gaily to her till it was time to go back.

"All the ladies have got their hats so smartly decked," he said as they reached the two whose hats Horace had employed himself in decorating with ferns. "Come! you mustn't be behindhand, Conny," so he took a bright carnation from his button-hole, and stuck it in her waistband. "That

is prettier than in your hat, and something new. You will set the fashion," he said, laughing.

"What a witch Conny is!" thought Horace, "she has succeeded better than any one in brightening up Charlie;" but the truth was, Charlie Bell had forgotten himself and his sorrows in trying to amuse the little girl. The old cloud, however, rose to his brow when Reginald and Agnes came sauntering up alone. Miss Turner had stayed behind with Gertrude to look for some rare species of fern, and Agnes being tired, Reginald had only too willingly seized the opportunity of returning with her alone. They were looking very bright and gay,—Agnes's blue eyes raised to Reginald's brown ones with a trustful happy expression. "Yes," she was saying, "Papa is coming here to-morrow, it will be all right then, and after that we——" she stopped, for they had reached the group. Reginald instantly left her, and walked off to Miss Lee, whilst Horace came up to Agnes.

"I think your party will have to be starting homewards; here is the pony-carriage." As he handed her in, he contrived to say, "Miss Selby, I must congratulate you in having secured the best fellow alive!" She laughed and blushed. Reginald had told her that Horace Lee knew all. Charlie noticed the laugh and blush. Was he then to have another rival in Horace? but he and Reginald

seemed to be on perfectly amicable terms. Were they then working together for one object? The whole would have been a puzzle to a wiser person than Mr. Charles Bell!

The gentlemen agreed this time to return by the same route as the ladies; they soon, however, passed the pony-carriage and waggonette. Charlie Bell lingered a little behind the others, and soon Horace and Reginald quite lost sight of him.

"Really," said Horace angrily, "he is the most provoking fellow I know. He is just doing that so as to be near the pony-carriage, and to absent himself from us. Well, if he prefers solitude to our company, I am sure he is welcome!"

They were interrupted by unusual sounds. Something (it sounded like the noise of horses' feet) was tearing along at an incredibly rapid pace; the next moment two little ponies dashed past with some of the tracings of a carriage still attached to them.

"The pony-carriage! The pony-carriage!" shouted Horace; "something has happened to it!"

Reginald turned very pale, and putting spurs to his horse, galloped back. He had not gone very far when a scene met his eyes which might have made a braver heart shudder. The little pony-carriage lay upset on the road, and nothing in it, but a little further on a crowd was quickly collecting.

Reginald saw nothing save Charlie Bell's form bending over a figure on the grass, apparently insensible. He afterwards learnt that the ponies, having taken fright at something on the road, grew so restive that the groom went to their heads and held them, whilst the party in the carriage got out. Agnes was the last to do so, and just at that moment, the ponies, notwithstanding the groom's efforts to keep them quiet, made a sudden plunge to one side, which occasioned Agnes to be thrown out with a good deal of violence. She was not seriously hurt, only stunned at first ; and meanwhile the ponies, which the groom now found impossible to hold in any longer, being left to themselves, plunged on in their mad career, upsetting the pony-carriage, tearing on alone, till some time later, being thoroughly tired out, they allowed themselves to be caught by a labourer. But Reginald knew nothing of all this at first. He cared nothing, he only saw Agnes lying on the ground, and dashing forward, with one strong arm he put Charlie Bell on one side, and with the other he gently supported her apparently insensible figure. She soon came to herself, and smiled when she saw who was bending over her.

"I feel better now, Reggie, thank you. I think if you helped me I could walk."

Charlie Bell had by this time got over the

astonishment which had rendered him mute for the time being.

“How dare you, Mr. Summers?”

“It is my right!” was Reginald’s answer. No one present could mistake the import of these words. Charlie Bell did not!

Reginald Summers’ and Charlie Bell’s eyes met for a minute, both flashing with pride, the one in triumph, the other in jealousy! and then Reginald started, for in that moment the likeness to himself shone out but too strongly for him to doubt any longer, and he knew, what he had for some time past suspected, that the eyes which gazed on him in such bitter jealousy were those of his brother!

Agnes was much better, only a little shaken, and had gone to lie down, so as to rest before dinner.

Reginald, much relieved, had left her, hoping she might get a little sleep; he entered the smoking-room, meditating passing the time that should intervene till the dressing-gong sounded with a cigar. The room was apparently empty, but as he advanced a little further, the light of the fire showed him Charlie Bell, sitting moodily by the window. He turned round almost fiercely when he saw who the intruder was. Reginald went up to him.

“I am very glad to find you here alone, I want

most particularly to speak to you, Charlie !” The name came out suddenly as if it had been an after thought, it was the first time he had called him anything but Mr. Bell !

“ Mr. Summers ! ”—Charlie laid particular stress on the name—“ I cannot think what you may have got to say to me, but I am sorry to decline an interview—it is very late, I am going to dress ! ”

“ Stop ! ” Reginald said, laying a firm hold on him (he felt he had a brother’s right over him now), “ it is not so late as all that—I want to tell you of a discovery I have made. Perhaps you are not aware that the gentleman you call Mr. Summers is your brother ! ”

To say that Charlie Bell was astonished would not at all depict his state of mind. At first he flatly and pointedly denied it. He had never even been aware that he had a brother, the fact having been concealed from him so as not to excite his jealousy regarding his brother’s better position. It was not till Reginald explained to him the undeniable proofs of their relationship that Charlie would let himself be at all convinced. He told him how he had at first suspected it by the story Horace told him, agreeing so well with his own ; that afterwards some hints dropped by Charlie in conversation as to his age, and the place of his birth, had made him almost sure ; and lastly, the striking like-

ness which he had himself seen that day, could leave no room for doubt.

"Look in the glass," he concluded, "and satisfy yourself as to our resemblance!"

Yes! it was not to be questioned! The eyes and hair were the same, and there was an undeniable likeness in the firmness of the mouth. Charlie Bell caught a glimpse of both their figures in the faithful mirror over the chimney-piece, and all doubt vanished; then he put his hands over his face and groaned:—

"Oh! I wish I had never known this!"

"Why?" Reginald asked, "I thought you would be glad to find you had still some near relation?"

"Why? because—because—" and the brown eyes flashed once more, "I should like to hate you, and I dare not if you are my brother!"

"Yes!" Reginald answered, a kind of pitying sympathy in his tone, "I cannot help knowing the reason." And then they both were silent. Charlie was the first to speak again.

"I must be going—I will start for London this evening." Then, seeing that Reginald was going to try and use entreaty, he added, "I might do or say something I should be sorry for afterwards; but I will shake hands with you before I go!" Then half hesitatingly he said: "I should like to see her once more—have you any objection?"

"None!" Reginald answered. He led the way. They entered the sitting-room together, where Agnes had gone to lie down. She was sleeping; the crown of golden hair shaded the white brow. She was a little paler than usual, but a rarely beautiful smile of perfect peace and happiness played on her lips. One little white hand had fallen by her side. On its third finger glittered Reginald's pledge of faith to her—a ring with one bright diamond in it—which he had that afternoon placed on her finger. Charlie gazed on her for one minute—a greedy, hungry gaze, mixed with a kind of wild infatuation—then he turned away. Seeing Reginald standing at the door, he held out his hand to him, "Reginald, I forgive you for having won her; guard her safely and pray for me." That was all, and then he was gone.

That evening Reginald told Agnes all, except of that last look Charlie Bell had given her. It seemed to him something too sacred to be betrayed, even to his betrothed. But Agnes, who could not help knowing that he had cared for her, said, on hearing he was Reginald's brother, "Poor Charlie! I am so glad he will be *our* brother after all!"

CHAPTER XV.

A WEDDING.

“Lieblich in der Bräute Locken,
Spielt der jungfräuliche Kranz,
Wenn die hellen Kirchenglocken,
Laden zu des Festes Glanz.”

Schiller.

AND everything went merry as a marriage-bell, as well as any one could have wished it !

The bride looked very pretty in a rich white silk, covered with honiton ; a wreath of orange-blossom in the soft wavy hair, and a veil of honiton falling in graceful folds around the slight figure. The bridesmaids, six in number, formed a pretty group, their dresses of white muslin, trimmed with white lace and pink ribbon, and pretty little white bonnets, with apple-blossom in them. Each wore the bridesmaid's locket on pink ribbon ;—frosted gold, with the initials “R” and “A” in blue enamel on it. Margaret and Carry walked first, then two little nieces of the bride—Eleanor and Violet Travers—and lastly, Gertrude Lee and Constance Hay. These stood in a half-circle behind the bride. The bridegroom looked remarkably handsome ; his figure erect, his head a little thrown back, his brown eyes brighter than usual ; in his button-hole he wore one pure, soft, white camelia,

which nestled amidst its dark green leaves. The best man, in whom we instantly recognise Horace Lee, stood close beside the bridegroom, and certainly is worthy of attention, although time does not permit us to bestow any on him, for the service is almost ended. Everything had gone off well. Agnes's voice had never faltered, and Reginald's firm "I will" was heard in every part of the church.

As soon as they rise, Reginald throws back the bride's veil and kisses her, whispering so low that she alone hears it: "God bless you, my darling, my own, own wife!"

Great had been the surprise at Lime Trees, as well as everywhere else, when Reginald, after an interview with Mr. Selby, which proved a very satisfactory one, announced his engagement to Agnes; still greater, when it was discovered that this was the veritable "Heiress of Kingsley Hall," whom every one had been so anxious to see. They declared it was like a romance, and so it was! Fanny Hyde, whom Carry told in triumph, bore the news very well, but was never afterwards heard to call Reginald anything more than a good-looking young man. It was agreed that Reginald and Agnes should take a nice little property called Forest Hill, not very far from Kingsley Hall, which had been let on a lease of two years. Till then Mr. Selby would live part of the time with his

daughter in London, and part with Reginald and Agnes. At the expiration of the lease he would return to Kingsley Hall, which was only at a convenient walking distance from Forest Hill ; and thus he could be near his daughter, without, as he rightly said, being a tax on the young married couple. And so everything had been arranged to every one's satisfaction, and one misty, foggy November day they had been married. Married ! Reginald could scarcely believe it was really true, as he stood with his wife in the drawing-room of the Travers' house in London, where it had been agreed the wedding festivities should take place. Reginald had never in the whole course of his courtship done what you young ladies call "spooning!" That was *one* comfort Carry had said, when some one asked her if a young engaged pair were not the most tiresome thing on earth ; but certainly now he felt his heart full of joy and tenderness, though he said in a grave tone, "Only one thing is wanting to make me *quite* happy—poor Charlie is not here."

"Yes," Agnes answered sadly, "I wish we knew where he is."

"Miss Constance will never forgive me," laughed Reginald ; "I met her just now, and wanted to give her a kiss, in my right as the bridegroom, but she was firm, and said 'Not until you bring Cousin

Charlie back.' I wish I could," he added heartily. And just then there came a call from the outer drawing-room for the bride to come and cut the cake, a most important affair, to judge by the eager faces of Eleanor and Violet Travers, and Violet's cry of delight when she found her favour contained the sixpence !

Where was Charlie Bell on his brother's marriage day ? Ah ! many had asked that question ! The night after his interview with Reginald he started for London, to return to his office, as every one thought. Reginald, happening to be in town a few days later, called at the office where Horace had informed him Charlie was to be found, but the clerks said he had not been there for several days, and his place was already supplied. Reginald next went to the Geoffreys ; they both affirmed that since the night when Charlie had come down from Ashley Park and informed them of having found his brother, they had seen nothing of him. He had evidently told them no more, for Mrs. Geoffrey was surprised to hear of Reginald's engagement, and would hardly let him go, so delighted was she to find another handsome nephew. Up and down Reginald searched, but no Charlie was to be found ; and at last he gave up in despair, hoping that when his brother came to his right senses he would write to him, or let him know where he was.

Up to the day of the marriage nothing had been heard of him, greatly to every one's sorrow. The Summers were disappointed, because they wanted to see Reginald's brother ; Horace, because he was Charlie's friend ; Reginald, because he longed to make up to his brother in some way for having taken the thing he loved ; Agnes, because she suspected she was the cause of his disappearance ; and as for little Constance, she was inconsolable for days afterwards, and would hardly speak to Reginald, declaring she knew it was his fault—he had been unkind to her dear Cousin Charlie !

“ The carriage is at the door ma'am,” announced the butler, and Agnes hurried over all farewells, and was handed into the carriage by Horace Lee, who told her she would miss the best part of the wedding, the dance afterwards—whilst poor Reginald hardly succeeded in making safe his exit out of the house, so pelted and beaten was he with old shoes. Three cheers for the bride and bridegroom ! and off the carriage dashed to the station, just in time to catch the train for Dover, from whence the bridal pair meant to cross to Belgium, and then pay flying visits to France, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, in succession, and be home in time for Christmas at Lime Trees, where there is to be a grand family gathering ! Once more three cheers, and God bless their union !

CHAPTER XVI.

THE ARROW AND THE SONG.

" I shot an arrow into the air,
It fell to earth I knew not where ;
For, so swiftly it flew, the sight
Could not follow in its flight.

" I breathed a song into the air,
It fell to earth, I know not where ;
For who has sight so keen and strong,
That it can follow the flight of a song?

" Long, long afterwards in an oak
I found the arrow still unbroke ;
And the song from beginning to end,
I found again in the heart of a friend."

OUR story began at Christmas—let it end there. To me it is that bright season where all unite together in joy and peace. A fit beginning! a fit end! Christmas,—the period when as the star shines out of the dark heavens, so Christ in the midst of heathendom and ignorance was born to bring light into darkness,—the beginning of the reign of light, the end of the reign of darkness.

It is ten years since the day when we accompanied two loving hearts before the altar. Ten years, how long they seem, and yet how short—ten years of joy and sorrow, of pleasure and pain.

There is a large gathering in the old mansion of Kingsley Hall. Its late owner, Mr. Selby, has been laid to rest in the little churchyard beside his forefathers. A marble monument marks the spot, but a monument of far greater duration than any man's hand could form is to be found in the hearts of those who knew him—I speak of the monument of never-dying gratitude, affection and love.

Reginald and Agnes Summers wander to the grassy mound every Christmas-day, and talk together of the loving, gentle old man, who was such a kind father to them both, and who lingered beside them for six years after their marriage, and then slept away calmly, as in the slumber of a little child he passed to the realms above. He is happy now, for he has gone to join all the loved ones who went before, and he is one of the joyful band who sing "Glory, glory, glory," around the throne of the Most High.

Reginald and Agnes Summers live at Kingsley Hall, honoured and beloved by all, and the old mansion resounds with the mirth of many children. Forest Hill is empty at present, but there is a report afloat that Horace Lee intends shortly to settle there with his newly-made wife, formerly Fanny Hyde. Reginald sincerely hopes it is true.

We will enter the large dining-room, from whence such merry sounds proceed. What a collection of

young and old folk ! But what is the cause of so much mirth ? Oh, do you not see ? It is the bright, glistening Christmas-tree, loaded with gifts for all. Little Charlie Summers shouts and begs that good kind papa, who does everything for every one, to get down the big-trumpet. He is just the same merry Reginald Summers, not a bit changed, his wife always proudly affirms, since his wedding-day. He says the same of her, and indeed you would hardly guess she was the mother of the boy of eight years old, who is lying on the sofa, his hand clasped in his mother's. Ah, that has been one affliction God sent that loving pair. The nurse to whom their first-born was entrusted let him fall, and so injured his spine for life. Agnes never in any joy forgets that child so precious to her—her second Reginald. Margaret and Carry are also there—Margaret a perfectly model aunt, and particular favourite with her little nephews and nieces. She is not married, nor likely to be so,—just one of those people we could not do without in the world, who seem born to be single, and yet are not, and never will be, what we term old maids. Carry is engaged to a young doctor, and thinks and speaks of no one else. She certainly has forgotten that she once condemned “spooning.” Grandpapa and grandmamma Summers, as the children call them, are always Christmas visitors at Kingsley Hall. Reginald

says the only reason he objects to their coming is, that they leave too great a blank when they go away, and as for the children, they are inconsolable. But who is that fair young maiden over whose head scarcely eighteen summers have passed? Those thoughtful grey eyes, the beautiful hair shading the low forehead—do you not recognise her? It is our little Constance, still little in stature,—“Little and good,” Agnes always says laughingly. She has Tiny Summers in her arms, the youngest child, her especial favourite, and is holding her up, so that she may get a better view of the Christmas-tree. So engaged are they all, that they hardly notice a footman entering the room, and going up to Reginald, “A gentleman wishes to speak with you, sir, alone; I have shown him into your study.”

“All right, I will be with him immediately.” Then turning to his wife, Reginald only stopped to say, “I shall be back directly—it is Mr. Greaves, the clergyman, I think. I told him, if he had time, to come up to-night with his family.”

But it was not Mr. Greaves who rose to meet Reginald as he entered the library. Mr. Greaves was very small and stout, and this was a tall young man, with an abundance of brown whiskers and moustache, a very foreign look about him, and yet bearing a striking resemblance to Reginald. But

for one moment Reginald wavers, and then "Reginald!" "Charlie!" broke simultaneously from both sides.

"Oh Charlie!" when Reginald could at last find words; "this is indeed happiness! but where have you been?"

"So you are really glad to see me?"

"Did you ever doubt it?"

"Well, sometimes."

"Oh, Charlie, for shame! when I searched for you up and down, far and wide! but I cannot believe yet that it is you; nevertheless you don't look very ghost-like, and that reminds me you must be hungry. Come, sit down; I will ring the bell and get you something to eat, and whilst you are discussing cold chicken and ham, you can tell me where you have been hiding yourself all this time." So when the tray was brought in, Reginald told the butler to admit none, but to say he was engaged, and then bit by bit Charlie's whole story came out. It was a very simple one. There had been no running to sea, no shipwrecks, which authors are so fond of making their heroes go through. No, Charlie feeling he could not see the woman he loved his own brother's wife, and besides hating the office in London, had accepted an appointment, which Mr. Geoffreys had vacant, in his counting-house in India. From the Geoffreys

he had insisted on exacting a promise to the effect that nothing should be said as to where he had gone, not stating to them his reasons why. They had faithfully kept their word, and had only truly said, when asked, that they had not *seen* Charlie since the evening he came from Ashley Park, which they indeed had not, for he had gone to Liverpool the next day, and sailed almost directly, but if they had not *seen* him, they had often *heard* from him ; this also at his particular request they kept a secret. Charlie explained to Reginald that his reason for so doing was, that he felt a wish to be alone and quiet with his own thoughts for the time, and knew he could not be so if every one was acquainted with his whereabouts. He confessed quite freely that for some years past all infatuation for Agnes had worn off, but hoping soon to be able to come home himself, he preferred taking them by surprise to writing. Contrary to his expectations, the illness of the manager, whose place he had to take in the counting-house, kept him two years longer in India than the time he had fixed for his return ; for Mr. Geoffreys, anxious to retain his old manager, begged Charlie to remain till such time as Mr. Craig should be able to resume his place. Charlie, unwilling to disoblige the Geoffreys, had been kept off and on, till at the end of two years Mr. Craig died of the

consumption which [unclear] if they are still away, and rendering death of Mr. Craig, [unclear] by one door, when place of manager [unclear] shopping, and then a with a very large [unclear] and straight in wished to settle some [unclear] of about four years immediately to come [unclear] blue sash, a perfect Liverpool about two [unclear] Charlie Bell knew to London, and [unclear] night in the room, and Geoffreys' persuasive [unclear] did not notice it was a down on Christmas [unclear] her "papa."

"How did you [unclear] want to know if oo tom-Reginald.

"Oh, the Geoffreys [unclear] was indeed very like, all particulars about Selby's death you [unclear] of children, took the tiny ing to see all your [unclear] will be back in a minute; me now are you, [unclear] little maid?" Reginald's hand was [unclear] promptly.

Reginald laughed [unclear] have told that,—the same, anything more for a large party here [unclear] looking up curiously into guests, amongst a little Constance I [unclear] won't you come and sit still, although she suppose you do [unclear] write was nestling [unclear] died?" oh! oo [unclear]

"Oh, yes; I

they came to call at the Geoffreys. You may imagine Horace's astonishment at finding me there. I thought he would have eaten me up alive. He wanted to telegraph down here directly, but I forbade him."

"Well, and what do you think of the bride?"

"Fanny," as he calls her; "oh, there is no doubt she is a very beautiful woman; he seems to worship her as if she were a second Venus."

"Well, for my part," answered Reginald, "her beauty is too much of the statuesque kind."

Oh, Reginald! Reginald! you used not always to think so, things have indeed changed. "I also heard," continued Charlie, "of Gertrude's marriage to Lord Weston, that Harry was a sailor, Dora a young lady, with very decided opinions of her own, going in violently for 'women's rights,' and all those kind of horrors! as for Conny (I suppose I should call her Miss Hay now), Horace said she was not the least changed. I can never think of her but as a sweet little child. She was always a devoted admirer of mine."

"Ah, yes, I know that to my cost. She would not speak to me for months after your disappearance, declaring I was the cause."

Charlie laughed. "She was not far wrong there, eh?"

"Well, now," said Reginald, "if you will stay

here a minute alone, I will just see if they are still in the dining-room."

He had scarcely left the room by one door, when from the other came a gentle tapping, and then a little hand turned the handle, and straight in walked such a tiny little fairy of about four years old, in a white frock, with a blue sash, a perfect miniature of an Agnes Selby Charlie Bell knew long ago. It was not very light in the room, and for the first moment she did not notice it was a stranger, but thought it was her "papa."

"Papa, papa! mamma want to know if oo to-ming soon;" then she stopped, and almost screamed when she saw that the face was indeed very like, but not the same.

Charlie, always fond of children, took the tiny hand in his. "Papa will be back in a minute; what may your name be, little maid?"

"Aggie," she answered promptly.

Ah, yes, he could have told that,—the same, and yet so different!

"What oo name?" looking up curiously into his face.

"I am Uncle Charlie; won't you come and sit on my knee?"

In a moment the little sprite was nestling in his arms. "Oo Uncle Charlie, oh! oo the funny man Conny tell me about."

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"What did Conny tell you about me?" he asked wonderingly.

"Oo play with her, when sh'e litto girl," said little Miss Agnes, but she was startled by her papa's voice, who had entered unseen.

"Hullo! Miss Agnes, what are *you* doing there? who asked you in here?"

The young lady, utterly unabashed, for she knew she had the privilege of being "papa's pet," slid down from Charlie's knee, and sprang into his arms. "Oh, papa! Conny's Cousin Charlie!"

"I see you are quite friends already," laughed Reginald; "you did not ever think of me as a Paterfamilias, did you?"

"Well, the Geoffreys wrote and told me something of the kind, but I certainly never realized it, and was almost startled when the little fairy burst in upon my meditations; I thought it was some sprite from above."

"Oh, oo funny man!" laughed Agnes, who, although she had not caught his meaning, was sure this speech could be only intended for her amusement.

Reginald smothered her with kisses. "Now, run away back to mamma, or come, I will carry you," and, perching her on his shoulder, he led the way to the dining-room.

The Christmas-tree had by this time been thoroughly despoiled, and the children were having a round game at "hunt the slipper," before being carried off to bed.

As Reginald entered a rush was made towards him by the children. "Oh, papa! oh, Uncle Reggie," but they stopped as they saw a stranger; and Reginald cried, "Now, children, make way! There, Aggie, go and play with the others," as he put her down from her pinnacle, "I want to find mamma."

That was no very difficult matter. She was sitting beside her boy, trying to make him forget he could not join in the noisy game, by singing to him softly, in her rich beautiful voice. She had just finished a Christmas-carol when Reginald came up.

She started when she saw a stranger with him.

"Oh, I knew I had not far to look for you; allow me to introduce you to a traveller who has come a long way to see us."

Their eyes met, and she could not doubt a moment. With something like a cry of joy she exclaimed, "Oh Charlie! It can be no other! Welcome to Kingsley Hall! But where have you been?"

"That is too long a story to tell twice in one evening; is it not, Charlie!" said Reginald: and then

he went up to his boy, and his whole tone seemed to change, and become one of tenderness.

"Reggie, my boy," as he passed his hand through the child's dark curly hair, "look, this is Uncle Charlie! welcome him here!"

Charlie's eyes almost filled with tears as he looked at the strong man standing beside his helpless boy. He had not expected *this*. He took the boy's thin, white hand, and said gaily, "Oh, I expect we shall soon be great friends! You are Reggie, are you not?"

"Yes, after papa!" with a proud look at his father.

"And now, Charlie, I will leave you to Agnes's care for a short time, while I go and get mother and father, Margaret and Carry; they would never forgive me if I did not introduce you to them directly," and Charlie and Agnes sat and talked together quietly and happily. Charlie loved her still as a sister, but all the bitterness, jealousy, and infatuation had passed for ever. The other introductions were speedily got through, and then Charlie suddenly said—

"I thought, Reginald, you said Constance Hay was here!"

"So she is. Hush! here she comes. I suspect she has been putting Tiny to bed, her usual occupation at this time. Do not say who you are; I want to see if she will recognise you."

"Conny!" as she advanced towards them, "I want to introduce you to some one."

It was no longer the child that stood before him, and yet how like to the child Constance of former days was the quick change of colour, the soft, truthful look in the grey eyes; but she knew his voice too well.

"Little Constance," he could not refrain from saying.

"Cousin Charlie!" and then a sudden rush of colour came into her cheeks, and she drooped the pretty eyes, half ashamed at having forgotten in the minute she was no longer the child, with childish privileges, and that what she had done at eight hardly became her at eighteen.

"I am glad you accept me as a cousin still; you are not a bit changed from the little thing that used to sit on my knee. I should have known you anywhere;" and then they both laughed. So the ideal knight of Conny's childhood had really come back—he who to her had always been what the Duke of Wellington is for schoolboys, or what King Arthur had been for the Knights of the "Table Round."

Charlie, whose disappearance had caused her the most bitter of infant tears, was he really there once more? It was like an old story long since hidden away and almost forgotten, suddenly come

to light again after many years, bringing with it a train of recollections whose links had been sadly scattered. Was it the old dream or a new one? Conny could not solve the question.

"Yes, Reginald," Charlie was saying on New Year's Day, "I am sorry I must leave to-morrow, but I have some business to arrange with Mr. Geoffreys, and besides (laughing) I must see Sir Andrew on my own account; you may be sure, however, that I will not be a day longer than is necessary, Conny would never allow that, and I could not bear it. How strange it all seems! If any one had told me ten years ago that the child Constance was to be my bride how I should have laughed at them! I am afraid" (he added rather gravely) "Sir Andrew will think me rather too rough a specimen to trust his tender little flower to." (Then laughing), "She can hardly yet get over calling me 'Cousin Charlie!' I tell her I will make it a fine."

Reginald only grasped his brother's hand warmly. Never could two brothers have been more to each other than these two were now. I think even their angel-mother from above must have looked down and smiled upon her sons once more reunited in the bonds of love!

Yes it was very strange, and yet true! Charlie

CHAPTER I.

IN WHICH WE ARE INTRODUCED TO OUR HEROINE.

"Some days must be dark and dreary."—*Longfellow.*

IT was a cold wet day in the beginning of January. Such weather is bad enough in the country; but every one knows how much more disagreeable it is in the town, with the rain running in muddy little streams between the chinks in the flags, and trickling like tear-drops down the window panes. Such a day was the one on which our story opens. The dull, narrow street was lighted up by a single lamp, which shed its dim rays on the passers-by. On this same evening, a girl might have been seen hurrying along; her eyes were brilliant with excitement, and her hands trembled as she drew the thick veil closer down, as she left the quiet street to enter a more frequented one. Her slight form was jostled by the many passengers who passed her. At last, turning suddenly down a long lane, she stopped before a small green door, with the words, "Manager, Drury Lane

Theatre," on the brass plate. She pushed it open, and was about to enter, when it was rudely slammed in her face, and a gruff voice asked, "Who is there?" Upon receiving the answer, however, the questioner seemed to be satisfied, for he muttered in a discontented tone, "Oh! it's only you, is it?"

The girl made no answer, and shrank a little from the man's rough hand, which was laid upon her shoulder.

"Well, the others be all there; you had best be quick, my dear," he continued, with a sort of impertinent familiarity.

She took no notice, but hastened through a long dark passage, and stopped before a door at the farther end. There she hesitated, as if to gain courage before entering, and pushing back her old bonnet, she clasped her hands, and murmured, with a rising sob, "O mother! mother! what would you say if you could see your child?"

She was recalled to the present by hearing voices and laughter. Hastily drawing down her veil, she entered the room, which was full of people, all eager talking, joking. The walls were hung at regular intervals with green baize curtains. Drawing back one of these the girl entered a long, narrow apartment. The furniture was composed of several shaky-looking tables, some rickety chairs, a small strip of soiled carpet, two or three cracked mirrors,

besides a great many dirty broken pots of rouge, powder, &c. &c.

"Well, Miss Somers, here you are at last, and late enough too! Come, make haste, and transform yourself into Cinderella as quickly as possible."

The speaker, a tall, showy-looking girl, arrayed as one of "the proud sisters," was seated in front of a looking-glass getting rouged.

May Somers at once obeyed. Stepping behind a screen she soon reappeared as Cinderella in her poverty and unhappiness. The girl at the glass turned round and inspected her with a critical eye.

"Yes, but your hands are too white and your hair not disorderly enough. There! that is better. Otherwise you are perfect—timid, shrinking, just as Cinderella ought to be!" exclaimed the lively actress. She had been knocked about all her life, and though bold and impudent, she had a kind heart, and it warmed towards this girl.*

"Warm yourself, child," she said peremptorily, pointing to the bright little fire; "warm yourself, and don't stand shivering there. Ah! there are nymphs and fairies!" as a crowd of shiny creatures, with wonderfully little clothing and a great deal of arms and legs, passed through the room.

May shuddered as she caught sight of the bold rouged faces, and turned away sick at heart.

"Why do you turn away? Are they not very well got up?" asked Miss Georgina Smithers, *alias* "the proud sister." "What! would you not like to be dressed up, and dance and kick and fling as they do?"

May raised her eyes to the speaker's face, and said earnestly, "God grant I may never come to that!"

Miss Smithers laughed harshly, and then almost bitterly she continued,—

"You are of far too tender a mould for this kind of life, Miss Somers. Wait, child, until you have seen all *I* have seen, until you have gone through all *I* have gone through, the insults, the indignities, ay, the starvation; and *then*, then, perhaps you too will be *glad* to earn a penny, even as those creatures yonder."

The girl's eyes flashed and her tone was excited, but casting them on the trembling form of May Somers, she stooped and kissed her quite gently, and said very softly,—

"You are like my little sister who is dead." Then resuming the old careless tone she said, "I hear the house is to be quite full. Keep up your courage, and if you feel faint just take a little of *this*"—tapping a flask which she hastily raised to her lips, and which Mary with horror smelt to be gin.

At this moment the curtain was hastily raised, a

crowned head peeped in, and a man's voice called, "Miss Smithers, time's up—stage ready—house full—Miss Smithers wanted." And Miss Georgina Smithers disappeared, waving a kiss to May and the words, "Mind don't look at the audience when you come in, and think yourself Cinderella!"

Whilst May with a beating heart awaits the summons to enter the theatre, we shall take a glimpse at her past history.

CHAPTER II.

A RETROSPECT.

"O World ! so few the years we live,
Would that the life which thou dost give
Were life indeed !
Alas ! thy sorrows fall so fast,
Our happiest hour is when at last
The soul is freed."

Don Jorge Manrique.

SOME eighteen years ago a young man might have been seen toiling amidst heavy snow-drifts through one of those dreary desolate moors that are so common in the county of York. Overcome by fatigue and hunger he at length sank exhausted to the ground. On his consciousness beginning to return, he found himself lying on a

bed, in a warm room. No sooner did he move, than he heard a soft voice say "He moves!" and a spoon with some stimulant was held to his lips. Too weak to speak or think, he lay with closed eyes, and the inmates of the chamber, supposing that he slept, held the following conversation:—

"Mother, I am sure he is an artist, for did you not notice that portfolio with drawings? and those boxes of crayons lying (father says) beside him in the snow? How handsome he is, and——"

"Now, Katherine, don't begin to get sentimental upon the subject. I hope we shall soon set him up again, poor fellow, for——"

He heard no more, for sleep had closed his eyelids.

We cannot enter into details. Suffice it to say that Edward Somers was an orphan, with no near relatives. He had lost his way on the moor, was found by a rich farmer, whose pretty daughter Katherine soon consented to share his poverty, much against her parents' will, and she was banished from the household hearth. After enduring great poverty and many trials, Kate died on giving birth to a little girl, May, the heroine of our story.

May Somers was a singularly pretty child, and her father had often made her sit as his model for fancy pictures. She made a very good one, for she would sit perfectly still, watching her father's

busy brush, and having a lively imagination, used to imagine herself the different characters she sat for. At seventeen she was indeed very beautiful, and possessed superior talents, which she had cultivated by study, and also by intercourse with the clever men who were constantly with her father. During their visits she sat still and unnoticed, but enjoying the conversation as much as any one. However, with all her beauty and abilities, May shrank from admiration, and was very shy; they lived very quietly, and almost never went out anywhere.

One evening, Mr. Somers and his daughter were asked to a brother artist's house, where a small party of friends was assembled. In the course of the evening, the host remarked that it was his intention to have had a "tableau vivant," but unfortunately the principal figure in the picture failed.

The subject chosen had been "Amy Robsart and Queen Elizabeth in the garden," from Kenilworth.

"I wonder if no one here would fill Amy's part?" asked the host, glancing round the room.

A silence followed this question, when a young man exclaimed—

"Oh, I am sure if Miss Somers *would*, there could not be a more perfect Amy!"

The timid blushing May shrank back as all eyes

turned upon her, but Mr. Somers answered for her.

“Of course May will be most happy to oblige you in any way she can.”

May was therefore chosen to represent Amy.

The effect was touchingly beautiful, and pronounced perfect. The “tableau” was called for again and again. One gentleman, a manager of the Drury Lane Theatre, remarked—

“By Jove! that girl would make a splendid figure on the stage.”

For May’s shyness had left her, and she threw her whole soul into her part.

Poor child, if she had known the sorrow awaiting her, could she have done so?

On returning home that evening Mr. Somers, never strong, complained of feeling faint and ill. Little did his daughter think, as she bade him good-night, that it was for the last time. In the morning Edward Somers was no more. May, alone and friendless, knew not where to turn for aid or counsel. In vain did she advertise for a situation as governess; she met with the same words everywhere, “Too young—a mere child.” In despair she knew not what to do, when one morning she received a note in a flourishing hand, which ran as follows,—

“MADAM,—Knowing that your means are not

large, and having heard that you seek employment, I write to offer you an engagement in the theatre. The play of 'Cinderella' is to be acted in a few weeks, and if you will accept the chief character in the piece I shall make it worth your while. I shall leave it open until to-morrow, when I request that an answer may be given. For further particulars call at my house, No. 3 South Melville Street, at ten o'clock, on Friday morning.—Yours &c., CHARLES BERRY, Manager D. L. Theatre."

After perusing this epistle two or three times, May sat dumb with astonishment at so unlooked-for a proposal. Her first thought was the impossibility of her accepting such an offer. Would it not be a dreadful degradation a coming down in the eyes of the world to act in such a play? No, it was not to be thought of!

Then her eye lighted on the words, "I shall make it worth your while."

Yes, she was in great need of money, and only for this once.

Then she trembled at the bare idea of confronting an audience.

Torn by conflicting emotions, doubts and fears, and having no one to whom she could turn for advice, the poor girl wept bitter tears.

A knock at her door made her hastily seek to conceal her sorrow.

A tall hard-featured woman entered the room.

"Miss Somers," she began, after May had placed a chair for her, "Miss Somers, I suppose you are aware to-morrow is rent-day, and know also that Mr. Somers owed me for two months. Therefore Miss, if the money is not forthcoming to-morrow, I give you fair warning that you must look for lodgings elsewhere, and your furniture will of course be forfeited."

May's eyes flashed at such cruel words. She drew up her tall graceful figure to its full height, and answered proudly—

"Very well, Mrs. Rawson. I am sorry that I must beg you to wait until to-morrow evening" (and there was a touch of sarcasm in her voice). "I shall not remind you of the debts your husband owed to my father, nor could he, as you know, ever have bought this house, had not my father's patronage got him customers for his drawings. Call to-morrow evening at half-past eight for the money."

The landlady, sullen, but awed by the girl's manner, left the room.

May's determination was taken. Without conceit, she knew she could act, and act well; she felt it, and indeed looked forward to that part of it as a great pleasure. She soon came to an agreement with the manager, who advanced the money at her particular request.

The rehearsals were poor May's horror, and a great trial to her,—her beauty drew upon her so much attention and notice. Some of the men were inclined to be familiar, and when she was haughty and reserved, she was laughed at by the others, many of whom were very jealous to see all their former admirers at May's feet. Altogether it was with a thankfulness not to be expressed, that May came back from the last rehearsal; and as she sat waiting for the signal to enter the theatre, she felt her spirits rise at the thought that it would soon be over.

"Are you ready, Miss Somers?" asked a voice.

"Yes," was her quiet answer, but her heart beat loud and quick as her guide drew back a heavy damask curtain, and May stepped on to the brilliantly lighted stage.

CHAPTER III.

IN THE THEATRE.

"Within 'twas brilliant all and light,
A thronging scene of figures bright."

Sir W. Scott.

IN one of the stage-boxes a very attractive group was assembled. An exceedingly handsome woman, evidently the chaperone of the party, sat a

little to one side, the stately head with its diamonds moving as majestically as that of an Eastern queen. Her black velvet dress fell in heavy folds round the grand figure. Her exquisite profile was seen to advantage against a dark crimson curtain. She was talking to a tall good-looking man, her husband.

"Kathleen, your father thinks we had better go before the last act, we shall be so late!" said the lady, turning to a sparkling pretty girl, who sat leaning over the box holding her fan, whilst a dashing young man played with the tassel of it.

Kathleen was just the right name for the girl. Her dark, liquid hazel eyes, always changing their expression, a profusion of bright dark curls and a snowy complexion. She was not as handsome as her mother, and never would be, but was very graceful and piquant-looking.

— She turned her pretty head with a gesture of impatience, and then in a pleading voice answered,—

"Oh, mother! why, it has just begun, and even if we *do* stay until the end it won't be so very bad; will it, Captain Torrin?"—this last part only for that gentleman's ears.

"There, father! now *do* let us stay, and Captain Torrin will help to get us cabs, he says. You don't want to go, do you? or perhaps Aubrey

is too tired? Really, I wonder he has existed and actually talked so much. Julia, have you a secret stimulant for rousing lazy—oh, I mean people who are continually fatigued?”

She had turned round, and was speaking to a pair in the background—the one a remarkably handsome youth. He had his sister's hazel eyes, but they were without any of the sparkling vivacity which lighted up hers. He was lolling in as comfortable an attitude as possible in one of the softly cushioned chairs.

He took his sister's jokes at his expense most good-naturedly, in fact hardly showed he heard them, except that the slightest smile passed over his face.

The aforesaid Julia, without being actually pretty, was very pleasant to look at, so fresh and natural, with mischievous laughing blue eyes, which danced as she answered her friend,—

“I am *afraid* Mr. Villiers is already fearfully tired; I quite *fear* he will be in bed all to-morrow after this immense fatigue of talking.”

The unfortunate being in question now smothered a make-believe yawn, and said,—

“Never was so tired in all my life; what o'clock is it, Kathleen?”

“Really, Aubrey, you are incorrigible; have you

not got your watch on?" and the damsel turned again to Captain Torrin and her fan.

Meanwhile the two in the background kept up a desultory kind of conversation.

"Slow this sort of thing rather ; not one pretty actress," said the before-mentioned Aubrey, stretching out his legs and suppressing a yawn.

His companion's blue eyes laughed as she answered,—

"Well, I can't say I find it so ; but you seem to find most things 'slow' except perhaps going to sleep!"

More to provoke her than anything else, he again pretended to yawn, saying,—

"I beg your pardon, but really I was never so tired in all my life ; shan't I sleep till lunch-time to-morrow!"

His brown eyes turned upon his companion, and a smile of amusement hovered an instant on his lips, as the young lady half sarcastically half indignantly replied,—

"Really, Mr. Villiers, I wonder you are not ashamed to confess such laziness!—although after what I saw the other day I need not be astonished. Do you know I should so like to shake you!" and she laughed merrily, and a quick blush passed over her face as Mr. Villiers quietly responded,—

"Then pray do so if you feel inclined, I am all

ready! But what did you see the other day that was so *very* outrageous?"

"My sister and I were at the Rileys' croquet party last week. You had got up a most charming private game (or rather games, for you played *three*, I think!) with those two Pinnocks, of whom you are so fond——"

Here Aubrey made a deprecating gesture, but Julia went on—

"Well, then, we shall say that the Misses Pinnock have a penchant for your society, it's all the same! But to continue,—I was eating an ice, when my sister's amused voice exclaiming, 'Well, I never saw anything equal to *that*,' made me look to see what diverted her. Do you know what I saw?—Mr. Aubrey Villiers stretched full length on the grass, and allowing his partners to wait until he had gained sufficient strength to proceed with the game! I assure you had I been your partner instead of wretched Miss Pinnock, I should have aimed straight for your head!"

Aubrey Villiers was now thoroughly roused, and he burst into a hearty fit of laughter, as he exclaimed, "G-o! did you really see it though?"

Before she had time to answer the stage-bell tinkled, and the curtain rolled slowly up.

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE STAGE.

"All the world 's a stage."—*Shakspeare.*

THE stage represented a room in the king's palace. The two sisters were preparing for the ball, and one, turning to the other, spoke,—

"And why does not that lazy wench, Cinderella, come to our aid?"

"I know not, sister; she said my sash must yet be made."

"If she tarries longer we shall, I fear, be late!"

"O gracious! do not put me in a state!"

"Cinderella!"

Both call "Cinderella!"

A side door opens and Cinderella enters. A murmur runs through the theatre. May's heart beats so loud and fast that she fancies she hears it. The words fled from her lips; the prompter had to come to her aid for the first three sentences, but after that she forgot all but her part. At the end of the scene she was recalled to a painful sense of consciousness on hearing a thunder of applause, cries of "Cinderella! Cinderella!" and renewed

clapping making it necessary for her to re-enter the theatre.

This time, with a faltering step, she curtsied gracefully, and raising her eyes timidly she glanced hastily around. A hundred opera-glasses were pointed at her. The heat, the light, the excitement, becoming too much for her, everything swam before her, and as the curtain dropped she fainted. She was quickly restored by cold water being dashed in her face by no tender hand, and heard a voice exclaiming, "Oh! we are accustomed to such scenes at first."

May opened her eyes, raised herself, and declared herself well enough to go on.

The last scene had come, and now May was to appear as Cinderella in full splendour, as the prince's bride. The man who acted this part was a young, handsome, but most dissipated character. He played the lover's part with far too much of reality for May's comfort, and persecuted her with attentions which were to her most odious. Certainly May Somers looked most exquisitely beautiful as she appeared in the last scene. Her tall, graceful figure, draped in its flowing silver robe, short enough in front to display the truly Cinderella-like feet. Her wealth of black silky hair fell in rippling showers round her, and the tiara of diamonds well suited the classical features. A rich colour suf-

fused her cheeks; and her dark blue eyes shone like sapphires. The curtain fell amidst a shower of bouquets and a thunder of applause.

CHAPTER V.

IN WHICH THE READER IS REQUESTED TO TAKE A VERY UNPLEASANT NOCTURNAL WALK.

"Hast thou gone through a dreary night,
And found no light,
No guide, no star, to cheer thee through the plain,—
No friend save pain?
Wait, and thy soul shall see when most forlorn,
Rise a new morn." *Proctor.*

MAY now hastened to put on her things and return to her lodgings. At the door of the theatre she was met by her zealous admirer, the pseudo-prince, who stated his intention of seeing her home. May thanked him, and after looking round in vain for some of the others, she answered that she preferred going home alone. The man however had no intention of letting her escape so easily. So assuring her that it gave him *no* trouble, that he must insist on going part of the way at any rate, he took her unwilling arm within his own. The night was very dark, and May heartily wished

herself at home. Once she stopped, saying,—
“Surely we have taken a wrong turning?”

“No,” answered her guide; “it is only a shorter way.”

May would have been happy if the conversation had ended here, but her tormentor continued,—

“How stunningly you acted! A perfect prodigy! The only thing *I* disapproved of was having such a haughty princess, and I am going to claim the kiss that you owe me, Miss May!”

May, with crimson cheeks and panting breath, endeavoured to withdraw her arm, but he held her too firmly.

“Mr. Murdles, how dare you insult me? I shall call the police!” And she succeeded in extricating herself.

In vain she looked for the welcome sight of a policeman, and still more terrified was she to perceive that they were in a street totally unknown to her. She hurried on, her persecutor keeping pace with her, taunting her with rude speeches and coarse jests. At last a sudden turn brought them into a street which possessed some very nice-looking houses. May, exhausted and sick with fear, was about to ring one of the bells, when a hasty “Is that the little game you’re at?” from the man, and catching the almost fainting girl by the arm, was about to lift her now insensible form into a

cab which he had beckoned, when—— But we shall leave the events that took place for a separate chapter.

CHAPTER VI.

IN WHICH THE READER IS INTRODUCED TO SOME OLD AND SOME NEW FRIENDS, AND MAY FINDS A DELIVERER.

“Thy sky is overcast,
Yet stars shall rise at last,
Brighter for darkness past.”—*Proctor.*

TWO figures, each with a lighted cigar, might have been seen strolling homewards. In the one we recognise Aubrey Villiers, the other is a stranger above the middle height. His figure is not remarkably good ; his face, when seen next to his companion's, would have been termed plain : but no face could have merited this epithet which possessed eyes like those now looking at the scene we have just described. They were not hazel and not black, but something between soft and liquid ; yet they could shine out in passion, and the mouth had a sarcastic expression very often.

“I say, Lionel,” began Aubrey Villiers, “your sister makes a fellah quite talkative ; by George ! she did not spare me to-night.”

"Which of them—not Flora?"

"No, the other. I declare had I known she was there I don't believe I should have ever lain down that day!"

His friend laughed, exclaiming, "Thou speakest in parables, my friend! but are your actions so easily influenced by my fair sister for good or evil? I pray you explain; where would you not have——"

He was stopped by Aubrey's sudden exclamation. A turn in the street brought them in sight of May just at the moment when Murdles was lifting her insensible form into the cab.

"Some mischief up there, I'll be bound! Shall we go to the rescue?"

Whilst Aubrey Villiers spoke, his companion had darted from his side, and so much occupied was Mr. Murdles that he did not hear his fleet footsteps, until a hand was firmly laid upon his shoulder and a commanding voice demanded, "What are you doing with that girl, sir?"

For an instant the man quailed under the other's steady gaze, then, resuming his bravado manner, he answered, "That is my affair, not yours! But since your impertinent and misplaced zeal has led you into a mistake, know that this girl is under my protection. I was placing her in a cab because she had fainted!"

Well was it for May that consciousness returned; for the young man hesitated to interfere after so plausible a story.

"G-o!" and Aubrey was about to utter an exclamation when his eyes fell upon the face of May; but he suppressed it as she raised herself crying, "No; what he says is untrue!" and clinging to Lionel's arm, said, "Sir, I am friendless in this city—save me from the insults of that man!"

All the generous spirit in Aubrey Villiers, which he was generally too apathetic to show, was roused. His hazel eyes flashed fire as Murdles attempted to approach the girl, and raising a stout stick, he in haughty tones said, "Take care! I know you. If you do not take yourself instantly off, I shall not only call the police, but have you lodged in the safest if not the most agreeable of places!"

Murdles, a coward at heart, muttered a few oaths, and jumping into the cab, he banged the door, calling to the cabman, "Drive on—quick!"

Aubrey now turned to his friend, who was trying to soothe the terrified girl, while she vainly endeavoured to thank him.

"Villiers! ring the bell, will you?"

Aubrey complied, and saying, "Well, I must be off—never was so tired in my life. You don't want me any more?"

Lionel's eyes expressed half amusement, half

irony, as he returned, "No! thanks for your help. I hope you will recover from the effects of such wonderful exertions! Good night! To-morrow I shall see you at half-past four for a walk!"

Aubrey raised his hat slightly to May, and walked away. May lent against the door for support. Lionel glanced at his companion, and then rang a second loud peal at the bell. He saw May's strength was fast failing her, and was half supporting her, when the door opened, and a timid neat-looking servant-girl peered into the darkness, asking in a tremulous voice, "Is it you, sir?" His cheerful voice reassuring the timorous Abigail, she opened the door wider, and continued, "O sir, Missus and the young ladies was so frightened at the noise on the street, sir."

Lionel Travers (for such was his name) now entered the house.

Unable to move, May sank into the chair he placed for her. Turning hastily to the servant (who viewed these proceedings with undisguised astonishment), Lionel asked, "Where shall I find Mrs. Travers? or stay—that will be better—send Miss Travers to me at once, but quietly, so as not to alarm my mother."

A moment afterwards and a light footstep was heard running downstairs. A figure appeared, lamp in hand, looking somewhat anxious.

Lionel stood so as to screen May from her sight.

"O Lionel!" said a soft voice; "what a fright you have given me, you naughty boy!"

His grave face stopped her light words, and laying her hand on his shoulder, she asked, "Is anything really the matter?"

He drew her aside, and spoke in a low tone. Presently May was conscious that a figure was bending over her, and heard that same soft voice asking, "Are you better now?" whilst a gentle hand bathed her burning brow with eau-de-cologne.

"Yes, thank you," and May raised her eyes to the speaker's face. She saw a countenance, not beautiful certainly, but one that to know was to love. Hazel eyes, that could look joyous, but their usual expression was grave and calm, as if their owner had passed through trouble which though past was not forgotten—curly dark hair, and a peach-like bloom in her cheeks: otherwise the features were not good. Her dress was of a heavy, dark violet material, and fell in artistic folds round the elegant figure. A handsome mosaic brooch and small gold watch were her only ornaments.

"Are you able to come upstairs now if I help you?" was the lady's next question.

"Yes, thank you; I think so." And poor May rose and was helped upstairs.

The door which her conductor opened led into

a room of cheerful aspect. A bright wood fire crackled on the hearth, and near it a round table, with tea laid out, and a hissing urn. In a low easy chair, a lady about fifty-six was seated, with a placid kindly face. Her brown hair, slightly streaked with grey, was arranged smoothly under a white lace cap. Her hands were busy knitting a coverlet of bright wools. A cottage piano stood open. May's champion was standing on the rug, and had evidently been relating his adventures to a girl about eighteen or nineteen, who, seated in a low rocking chair, was listening with great interest. She had apparently been out somewhere, for her dress was white silk, and the opera cloak which she had flung aside displayed pretty fair plump shoulders.

As May entered, Julia—for it was she—was exclaiming, "Well, Lionel, you are quite a knight-errant; let's see what the fair damsel is like!"

May's entrance, and a hasty "Hush!" stopped the lively young lady's further remarks.

May bowed as Miss Travers introduced her mother and sister, and quietly placed a chair for her; at the same time undid her wraps. Scarcely, however, had the heavy shawl fallen from May's shoulders, and her bonnet, which allowed her rich masses of hair to be seen, than Julia, quite forgetting every one, exclaimed, "Lionel! I do declare it is Cin——" then suddenly stopped short.

"Who? who?"
astonished.

But Lionel, with an
exclamation on his lips,
interposed hastily.

"Never mind,"
paused, at a loss.

May quietly said,

"Miss Somers,"
your good tea, Flora.

Flora had already
of delicate toast,
not eat; and, turn-
wards Lionel, said,

"Perhaps you will
cab," "and let me
but she substituted

Lionel gave one
at Mrs. Travers,
smoothed her hair,

"No, my dear, sit
Flora will help you.

Flora, as seemed
unobserved, and st.

The latter, her li-
ened, tried in vain
ing, she only bowed.

"She is so stiff,"



"All the same," continued Lionel, in his provokingly deliberate tone; "I have at last come to the conclusion that this Miss Somers, *alias* Cinderella" (Julia clapped her hands softly, whispering, "I knew his thoughts were with Cinderella!") "is no other than the daughter of Mr. Edward Somers the artist, who was such a friend of our father's. I saw his death lately in the papers, and know he left a daughter; however, I cannot imagine how she comes to be on the stage! Come, Flo, lend your aid to unravel the mystery!" And as she nodded assent, he ended this oration. He gave a long whistle, saying, "I'm off to bed, girls, and Julia, if you don't want faded roses for the ball to-morrow night, I advise you to follow my example. Aubrey Villiers is to be there," he added, casting a mischievous glance at his sister.

She seemed in no ways disconcerted, and only remarked, as she said good-night,—

"I wonder he takes the trouble to dance, he is sure 'never to have been so tired in his life,' and she mimicked his tone so exactly that Lionel burst out laughing, and as she left the room called after her,—

"I declare, Julia, you are the most impudent little monkey I ever set eyes upon."

Flora, now left to her own devices, tapped

lightly at May's door, but receiving no answer entered. A pretty picture met her view.

In an arm-chair, her tiny slippered feet crossed upon a footstool, lay May asleep, her loosened hair fell in ebony masses round her pale face, and the long silken lashes rested on her cheek wet with tears.

Flora stood an instant looking at her, then, frightened by the death-like pallor, went up and kissed the sleeper's forehead.

May opened her eyes half bewildered and murmured,—

"I had such a pleasant dream, that some one kissed me as my mother must have done."

Flora's heart warmed towards the forlorn girl, and sitting down on a low chair, she drew the agitated May to her, and said,—

"I kissed you, dear!"

Long, long did the girls talk that night, and friendship was begun whose bands were to become firm with time. At last Flora insisted on May getting into bed, and scarce was the young wearied head on the pillow than she was asleep.

Flora stood an instant gazing on the fair sweet face, and carefully shading the light from her eyes, then stooped and imprinted a kiss on her forehead, and as she did so a tear dropped on the sleeper's hand.

Sleep, May, for happy days are yet in store for thee. Kind loving faces shall yet bring sunshine to cheer thy young life.

CHAPTER VII.

“EVERY CLOUD HAS ITS SILVER LINING.”

“Annchen von Tharaw ist die mir gefällt
Sie ist mein Leben, mein Gut und mein Gelt.”

Simon Dach.

FIVE years have fled, and, dear reader, we must beg you to accompany us to a pretty villa in the suburbs of London. In a pleasant sitting-room a young and handsome lady is working at a child's sock. On the carpet beside her lies a baby of a year old. Twilight gradually draws on, the infant's eyes grow heavy, the lady fondles and pets her babe, and the nurse fetches it to bed. The knitting-needles cease their cheerful click, the young mother seems wrapt in thought. Presently she rises, goes to her davenport, and unlocking a side drawer produces a packet of papers, one of which she withdraws, and as she looks at it tears gather in her eyes. Her husband has entered the room unobserved, and laying his hand caressingly on the glossy black hair, asks,—

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"What is the matter with my May blossom?"

She looks up at him smiling through her tears as she says,—

"Oh Lionel! I am only so thankful! It is just five years since that night," and she points to the paper she holds.

We shall also take the liberty of peeping over his shoulder. We see a play-bill on which is printed, "January 18th, 18—, in Drury Lane Theatre! the new and magnificent play of Cinderella!!! &c. &c." The gentleman smiles too, and is about to speak, when a curly-haired dark-eyed little maiden of three runs in shouting,—

"Mamma! Mamma! here is Auntie Flora."

And Flora enters, not at all changed. There is not much outward demonstration between May and her, but their hearts are knit in close friendship. Julia is married, and it happened thus:—

One night after a ball, she came home with a deeper colour in her cheeks, and a look in her eyes so gleaming and happy, that Flora drew her sister to her, whispering—

"Is it so? may I congratulate you, my darling?"

Her colour deepened yet more, and the excitable girl burst into tears, whispering—

"Yes, I'm so happy!" but her love of fun did not even then forsake her, for raising her eyes, still wet with happy tears, she said, laughing the while,—

“Yes, Flo! he actually took the trouble to propose to me; and more than that, he never *once* told me ‘I was never so tired in my life!’”

And Flora! People are surprised she is still unmarried; she herself always laughs, saying, The mother-bird must not be left in the nest alone.

If the veil of the past could be lifted, we should catch a glimpse of a time when Flora loved and was beloved; but death parted that *one* from her. She would never marry. But the world never knew this, and to it she appeared light-hearted and gay.

So let us drop the curtain, for, reader, our simple tale is told.



